

Chapter 1: Early People

Prehistoric People

The hunters of the last Ice Age, who lived around 100,000 years ago, were probably the first people to wear clothes. However, there is no proof of when clothing first developed, since the materials used to make clothing decay easily and rapidly, and the earliest examples of clothing did not survive. Recent DNA evidence indicates that some time between 30,000 and 114,000 years ago, head lice, which typically infest human hair, evolved a new sub-species, body lice, which commonly infest human clothing.

Prehistoric people wore simple clothes made from animal skins, and added jewelry and ornaments made from shells, bones and feathers.

Making Clothes

The first clothes were probably simple tunics, trousers, string skirts, belts, and cloaks. These were

sometimes made from fur, although this could be very bulky. More often the fur was removed from the animal hide. However, people did wear fur boots, tied onto their feet and legs with leather laces.

To make clothing, animal hides were first pegged out on the ground and scraped clean, using a sharpened animal bone or sharp-edged stone. Then they were washed and stretched out taut to stop them from shrinking as they dried. Once the hides had been thoroughly stretched, the leather was softened before being cut into suitable pieces for clothing. Then a sharp, pointed stone was used to punch a line of holes along the edges of the leather pieces. The holes made it easier to pass a bone needle through the hide and sew the pieces together, using sinew.



Early Decorations

Evidence survives from around 30,000 years ago of hunters decorating their clothes. The mammoth hunters of the Russian plains sewed seashells and feathers onto their tunics. They also made strings of beads from shells and animal teeth, and used ivory from mammoth tusks to make simple bracelets. Archaeologists believe that the mammoth hunters wore these decorations for religious ceremonies and dances.

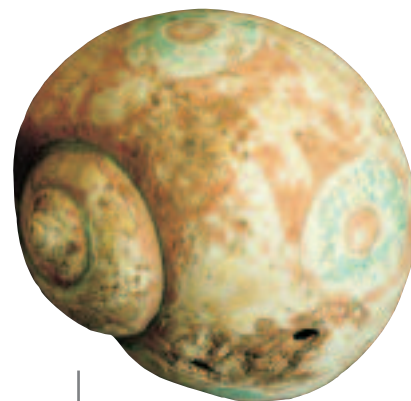
Cave Paintings

Around 35,000 years ago, people began painting pictures on the walls of caves. Some of these early cave paintings depict semi-human creatures, and experts believe that these figures were probably priests dressed as animals. The painted, dancing figures wear deer antlers attached to their heads, and long wolves' tails. They also appear to be wearing cloaks made from feathers.

Body Paints

There is evidence that the early cave painters painted their bodies as well as their caves. Traces of red ochre

pigment have been discovered on bodies in graves, suggesting that people decorated the bodies of the dead before they were buried. It is probable that people also used pigments to paint patterns on their own bodies, just as people have done for millions of years in Africa and Australia. Specialized tools for permanent tattooing dating from around 38,000 years ago have been discovered in Europe.



Shells were one of the first materials to be made into jewelry. These very early carved and painted ornaments reflect an ancient tradition of jewelry making.



Where's the Evidence?

Archaeologists draw on a range of different sources to build up a picture of the sort of clothes that very early people wore. Scraps of leather clothing have been found in graves, while shells and teeth pierced with holes indicate that these objects once formed necklaces. To help them reconstruct the practices of ancient people, archaeologists also study traditional groups, such as the aboriginals of Australia and the Inuit of Alaska, who have followed the same basic way of life for thousands of years.

First Civilizations



Even in the earliest civilizations, color and pattern were very important. This painted plaque from the twelfth century BCE shows a woman from Nubia (in North Africa) and a man from Syria, both dressed in colorful costumes.

Dyes from Nature

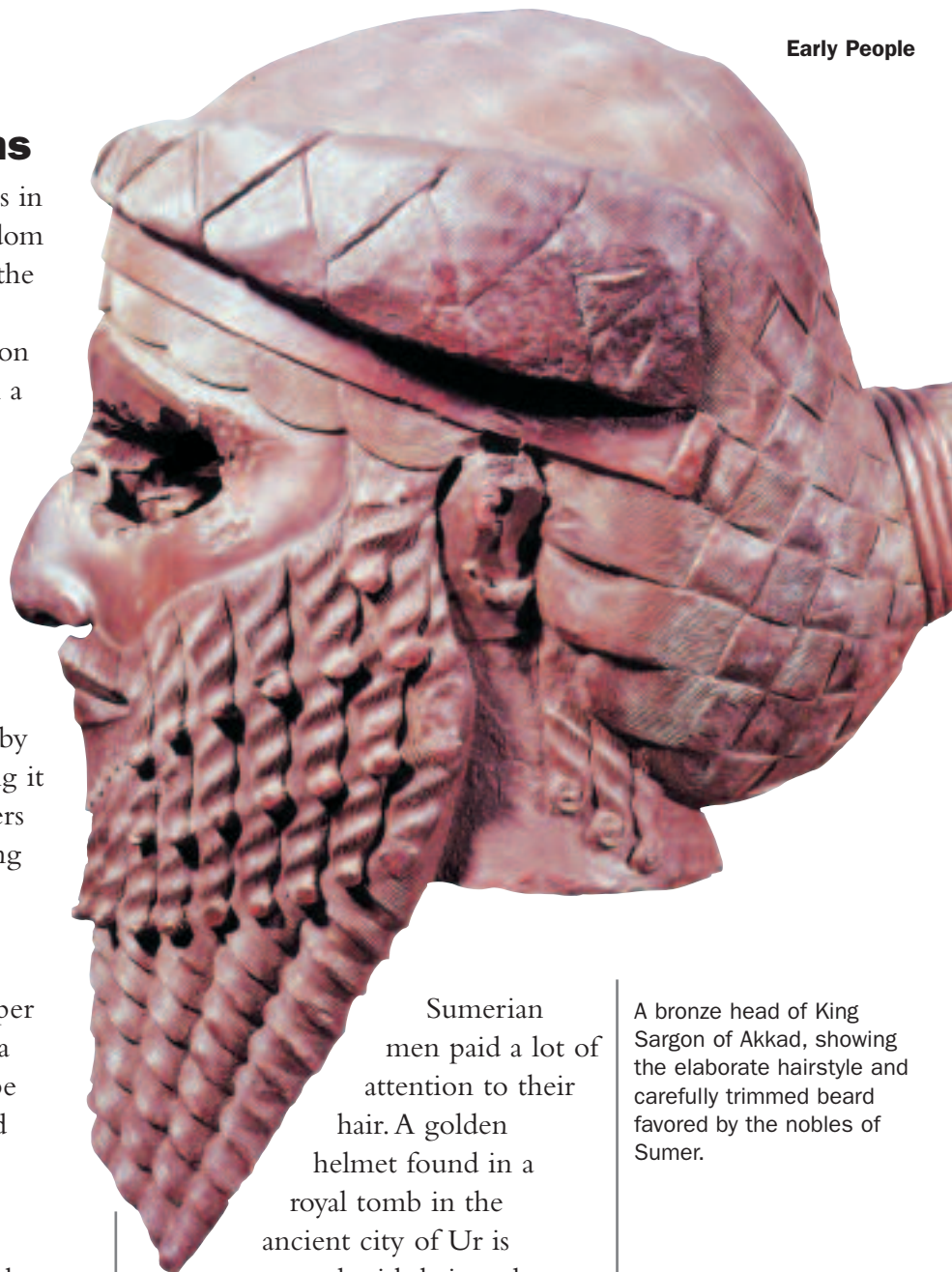
Early people colored their clothes with dyes made from earth, flowers, and bark, and in some parts of the world people still use these natural dyes. A type of clay called ocher produces warm reds, oranges, and yellows. The indigo plant makes a deep blue, while the madder root gives a rich scarlet. Some lichens produce a green color, while the bark and husks of walnut dye cloth a deep brown.

Ancient Sumerians

One of the earliest civilizations in the Middle East was the kingdom of Sumer, which lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in present-day Iraq. The civilization began around 3500 BCE with a collection of villages, and by 3000 BCE it contained several large city-states, each ruled by a warlike king with his own army.

The ancient Sumerians learned how to make objects from copper, silver, and gold by heating metal ore and pouring it into molds. Their metalworkers became very skilled, producing engraved necklaces, daggers, and helmets. The Sumerians made another important discovery: by combining copper and tin, they created bronze, a very strong alloy that could be used to make axes, spears, and more robust helmets.

The ancient Sumerians wore colorful robes with scalloped hems. Rulers had tall headdresses, while dancers and musicians wore sleeveless robes with multi-tiered skirts. Soldiers wore knee-length tunics with scalloped hems and long cloaks fastened at the neck. They fought with long spears and wore pointed helmets. The production of cloth for export was very important to the economy and culture of ancient Sumeria. They even had a goddess of weaving and clothing, named Uttu.



Sumerian men paid a lot of attention to their hair. A golden helmet found in a royal tomb in the ancient city of Ur is engraved with hair and ears, revealing that warriors wore their hair in an elaborate style: hanging down in curls around the ears, braided at the front, and fastened in a knot at the back of the head. A similar braided hairstyle is shown in a bronze head of King Sargon (reigned c. 2334–c. 2284 BCE), who ruled the land of Akkad, just to the north of Sumer. In addition to his elaborate hairstyle, the king also sported a splendid curled beard, carefully trimmed to fall in two tiers.

A bronze head of King Sargon of Akkad, showing the elaborate hairstyle and carefully trimmed beard favored by the nobles of Sumer.

Chapter 2: Ancient Egypt

Clothing and Jewelry

Around 5000 BCE farming villages began to grow up around the Nile River in northern Africa. Gradually, from around 3100 BCE, the villages of the Nile joined together to form a great kingdom, ruled by powerful pharaohs. The Egyptian civilization flourished for three thousand years. Historians divide it into three main periods, or kingdoms: the Old, the Middle, and the New Kingdom.

An Egyptian pharaoh from the New Kingdom being anointed with oil by his queen. Both figures wear pleated robes of fine royal linen, and have ornate collars and elaborate crowns.



Egyptian farmers, like the figures shown here, wore short kilts made from coarse linen.

Using Linen

In the hot and sunny climate of North Africa, which in ancient times was also very humid, the ancient Egyptians did not need to wear heavy clothes. Clothing was made from linen, which was cool and easy to wear. Linen thread was made from the beaten stalks of the flax plant and woven on looms into cloth. Ordinary people wore simple clothes made from coarse, unbleached linen, while nobles' clothes were made from a fine, white, semi-transparent cloth known as royal linen.

Clothing Styles

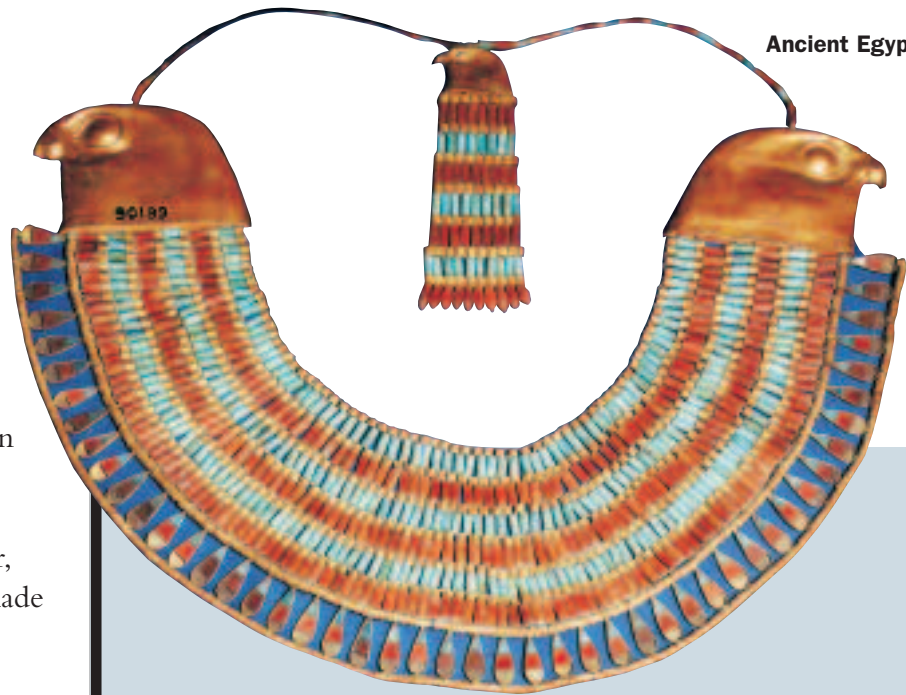
For thousands of years the basic style of Egyptian clothes remained unchanged. Women wore a simple, tight-fitting, ankle-length dress with two shoulder straps, while men wore a kilt, made from a piece of linen wrapped around the waist and tucked in. Kilts could be either knee- or ankle-length. In winter, men and women wore cloaks made from thick linen.

Tunics and kilts were usually kept plain. Although their clothes could be decorated with beads and feathers, the Egyptian people relied on their jewelry, makeup, and hairstyles to create a dramatic effect.

During the time of the New Kingdom, a more elaborate style of dress developed in Egypt. Tunics and cloaks made of very fine, pleated cloth became fashionable for men and women. Over their basic tunic women began to wear a pleated garment that sometimes had a brightly colored fringe and small ornaments hanging from it. Some men wore a long, almost transparent kilt over their short tunic.

Jewelry

No Ancient Egyptian costume was complete without a selection of jewelry. Even poorer people wore necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. Poor people's jewelry was made from cheaper substances such as copper and faience (a colored, glazed pottery), while the rich wore



This fine collar belonged to an Egyptian princess. It is decorated with golden hawks' heads and inlaid with colored glass and semiprecious stones.

Colorful Collars

One of the most impressive items of Egyptian jewelry was the broad, decorative collar. These collars were worn by both women and men of all classes. The collars consisted of a series of strings threaded with beads and ornaments, but also with flowers, berries, and leaves. Some of the collars found in the pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb included olive leaves and cornflowers.

spectacular pieces made from gold and silver and often set with semiprecious stones and glass.

Footwear

People in ancient Egypt went barefoot most of the time, but sometimes they wore sandals. Rich people's sandals were made from decorated leather, and one pair of golden sandals has been discovered in a pharaoh's tomb. Poor people's sandals were made from papyrus (a type of reed) or from woven grass.

Egyptian Beauty Care



In this painted banquet scene, four young women wear braided wigs decorated with lotus flower blossoms. The artist has also shown cones of fat resting on top of the women's heads (see Cool Cones).

Looking good was very important to the ancient Egyptians. They worked hard to keep themselves clean and sweet-smelling, and both men and women used cosmetics, which they kept in elegant pots. The Egyptians also paid a lot of attention to their hair, and some rich people shaved their heads and wore elaborate wigs.

Hair and Wigs

Most Egyptian men were clean-shaven and kept their hair fairly short, although some noblemen had longer hair. In the early periods, women usually had a chin-length bob, but by the time of the New Kingdom noblewomen wore their

hair long. These long tresses were sometimes worn loose and sometimes curled and braided. Noblewomen liked to decorate their hair with flowers, beads, and ribbons.

Pharaohs and nobles often shaved their heads and wore elaborate wigs. Less wealthy people also wore wigs, but only for special occasions. Egyptian wigs could be amazingly elaborate, with lots of braids and curls. Some wigs had ornaments hung over them, or were decorated with beads and jewels. The best wigs were made from real hair, but there were also cheaper ones made from black wool.

Cool Cones

Paintings of ancient Egyptian banquets show the guests with rounded cones on their heads. It is believed that these were cones of perfumed fat that gradually melted during the course of the meal, keeping the guests cool and also ensuring that they smelled sweet. However, some experts believe that the cones were drawn by artists to indicate that the person was wearing a scented wig.

Children had their hair shaved off or cut very short, except for one section that formed a kind of ponytail on one side. This s-shaped lock was called the “side-lock of youth.” Sometimes children wore a fish amulet in their hair, perhaps to protect them from drowning in the Nile.

Cosmetics

Egyptian cosmetics were made from finely ground minerals mixed with oils. Green and black eyeliners were made from malachite (copper ore) and galena (a type of lead), while red ocher was used for lipstick and blush. The Egyptians took a lot of care over making up their eyes; they outlined them with heavy lines, which drew attention to the beauty of the eyes and also helped to shield them from the glare of the sun. Green eyeliner was used in the early period, but later black became very popular. Red-brown henna, made from the leaves

of the henna tree, was used to paint nails and possibly hands and feet, and henna was also used to dye hair and wigs.

Cosmetics were prepared and stored in jars and bowls, and sometimes in hollow reeds. Makeup was applied with the fingers or with a special wooden applicator. To help them apply their makeup, the rich used mirrors made from highly polished metal. Poor people had to manage by observing their reflections in water!

Smelling Sweet

In the hot climate of Egypt it was very important to keep clean. Most people washed in the river or used a basin and jug of water. Instead of soap they used a cleansing cream made from oil, lime, and perfume. They also rubbed scented oils into their skin to stop it from drying out in the sun. Perfumes were made from flowers, seeds, and fruits soaked in oils and animal fats.

This decorated makeup box belonged to the wife of an important architect. The glass and ceramic jars would have held perfumes, oils and cosmetics.



Pharaohs, Queens, and Priests

This solid gold burial mask comes from the tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun (1332-1322 BCE). It shows the young king wearing the striped *menes*, with its twin symbols of the vulture and the cobra, and carrying his royal crook and flail.

Religion was central to ancient Egyptian society. The Egyptians believed that their land had originally been ruled by gods, whose power had passed directly to the pharaohs. So pharaohs and their families were treated like gods and wore highly elaborate ceremonial costumes.

Pharaohs

One of the most important elements of the pharaoh's dress was his crown or headdress. Early kings often wore a red-and-white crown symbolizing the two parts of their kingdom: red for lower Egypt and white for upper Egypt. Rulers of the New Kingdom wore a bright blue crown like a battle helmet, reflecting their important role as a warrior.

Later rulers, such as Tutankhamun, often wore a long, striped headdress called a *menes*. The *menes* was usually decorated with the heads of the pharaoh's twin protectors: the vulture and the cobra.

In paintings and carvings, pharaohs are often shown holding the symbols of their office: the royal crook and flail. The crook symbolized the pharaoh's protection of his people, while the flail stood for the punishment of his enemies.

Queens

The pharaoh had many queens, but the chief queen was usually his sister or half-sister. She was believed to be a goddess and was dressed in astonishing splendor. Paintings and carvings show Egyptian queens wearing tall, jeweled headdresses, golden collars, armlets, and finger rings.

Priests

Priests wore only the finest, pure white linen. They had to purify themselves by bathing in a sacred lake at least twice a day. They also had to shave their whole bodies, including their hair and eyebrows. Most of the time the priests dressed simply to carry out their duties in the temples, but sometimes they wore special costumes and headdresses. In the final stages of the embalming ceremony

False Beard

Most Egyptian men were clean-shaven, but pharaohs wore a long beard that grew from the base of their chin, as a sign of their royal status. At one point in Egyptian history, between 1473 and 1458 BCE, a woman ruled as the pharaoh. Carvings show that Queen Hatshepsut was properly crowned as pharaoh and wore the full royal regalia, including a false beard!





(when a dead body was being prepared to be a mummy), the chief priest wore a jackal mask. This dramatic, painted mask, which covered his whole head and shoulders, represented the god Anubis.

Amulets

Many items of jewelry worn by ordinary Egyptians featured good-luck charms, known as amulets. The amulets depicted religious symbols such as the ankh (a cross with a loop at the top) representing eternal life, or the *udjat* eye (the eye of the god Horus) symbolizing healing and good health. Sometimes these charms took the form of ornaments or brooches. In other cases, a sacred symbol was

painted or carved into a piece of jewelry. Some necklaces and earrings featured charms to ward off snake bites!



A chief priest, wearing his ceremonial mask, tends the body of a dead pharaoh. The mask represents Anubis, the jackal god. According to ancient Egyptian belief, he led the dead to judgment.

The Pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife, Queen Nefertiti, who reigned in the 1350s BCE, dressed in semi-transparent robes and simple crowns. For grand ceremonial occasions, Egyptian rulers wore more elaborate costumes.

Chapter 3: Peoples of Western Asia

Around 2000 BCE the ancient civilization of Sumer (see page 9) collapsed. This was the start of a turbulent period in the Middle East, as many different peoples battled for control of the fertile lands around the Persian Gulf and the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Over the next 1,500 years, a series of powerful kingdoms rose and fell. Many of these civilizations were very warlike, some were great traders, and some produced fine buildings and works of art.



Hittite warriors wore leather tunics covered with iron plates. To protect their heads they had iron helmets with a distinctive crest, which was probably made from horsehair.

Hittites, Canaanites, and Sea Peoples

Around 2000 BCE the Hittite people settled in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), and within four hundred years they had conquered an empire that stretched as far south as present-day Syria. For more than two centuries they were one of Egypt's most dangerous enemies.

The Hittites were tough warriors who developed a new and effective battle dress. When they rode into battle in their war chariots, they dressed in leather tunics covered with metal plates, giving them excellent protection against enemy spears and arrows. Hittite warriors carried long wooden spears tipped with iron, which were much stronger than the bronze weapons of their opponents. They wore iron helmets with flaps to protect their neck, and carried large wicker shields.

Cloth from Canaan

To the south of the Hittite empire lay the more peaceful land of Canaan. Most of the Canaanites were farmers and merchants, and Canaan had several thriving ports on the Mediterranean coast. Weavers in Canaan produced a colorful, patterned cloth that was sold by merchants to people all around the Mediterranean. Wool and linen were dyed in a range of brilliant colors, including scarlet, green, blue, and gold, and bold patterns and borders

were woven into the cloth. The people of Canaan made their colorful cloth into striking clothes. Some wore several layers of different patterns, while others preferred a simple, long, white tunic, edged with a dramatic band of color.

Sea Peoples

Eventually, the Hittite empire was destroyed by an army of Sea Peoples (also sometimes called Philistines), who originally came from Greece.

The Sea Peoples wore short, colorful tunics decorated with bold, contrasting bands of color. They fought with iron-tipped spears and swords, and protected themselves with round, wooden shields. One of their tribes, called the Sherden, wore distinctive battle helmets, crowned by two small horns. The horns may have had a religious significance or they may have simply been intended to make the warriors appear more frightening. The warrior Goliath, whose fight against David is recorded in the Bible, was a member of the Sea Peoples.

Two armed warriors from the army of the Sea Peoples. The soldier on the left wears the distinctive horned helmet of the Sherden tribe.



Hebrews

The story of the Hebrews is told in the Old Testament of the Bible. They were a wandering desert people who gained control of some land in Canaan between 1200 and 1050 BCE. Around 1000 BCE the Hebrew king David (reigned c. 1005–c. 965 BCE) established the kingdom of Israel with its capital city in Jerusalem. The kingdom split in two in about 931, and the northern kingdom, called Israel, was conquered by the Assyrians (see pages 22–3) around 722. The southern kingdom, Judah, was attacked by the Babylonians (see page 24) in 597, and ten years later the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. The Hebrews, who came to be known as Jews, were taken into captivity.



A Hebrew priest wearing the “white garments”—a turban, tunic, breeches and belt all made from pure white linen. These garments were worn as a sign of humility before God.

Most Hebrews dressed very simply in tunics or long dresses. To keep off the glare of the sun, people often wore a cloth over their head, which was fixed in place with a narrow headband. Hebrew kings, however, wore rich robes, adorned with precious stones, while the most magnificent costume of all was worn by the high priest.

Ceremonial Garments

Around 950 BCE King David's son Solomon (reigned c. 965–c. 931 BCE) built a spectacular temple in Jerusalem to house his people's most precious treasure, the Ark of the Covenant. The high priest in charge of the temple wore a special set of ceremonial clothes known as the golden garments. According to Jewish belief, God gave the prophet Moses detailed instructions for the making of these sacred garments, and these instructions are all recorded in the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament.

The golden garments consisted of eight separate items: a tunic, a belt, a turban, a pair of linen breeches, a breastplate, an ephod (a type of apron), a robe, and a golden head plate. Over the white tunic and pants, the high priest wore a sky-blue robe, hemmed with decorative pomegranates and bells which tinkled as he moved. On top of the tunic was the ephod, with two sardonyx stones on its shoulder-straps, and a breastplate, set with twelve precious stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Finally, the turban was placed on the high priest's head, and the golden head

plate fixed in place with its inscription, “Holy to the Lord.”

The high priest wore his golden garments every day of the year except on the Day of Atonement, the Hebrews’ most holy day. On this day, the high priest showed his humility before God by wearing the white garments: a turban, tunic, breeches, and belt, all made from pure white linen. Other priests wore the white garments all through the year.

Special Materials

The Book of Exodus lists five different materials to be used in the making of the golden garments: gold, sky-blue wool, dark red wool, crimson wool, and “twisted linen.” Many years of research have gone into discovering exactly which materials were used. The evidence suggests that gold leaf was beaten into thin sheets, and then cut into fine threads; the sky-blue dye for the wool came from a shellfish known as chilazon; the dark red color was derived from a type of snail; and the crimson color was produced by the cochineal insect. To weave the tunic, turban, and breeches, a thick linen thread was used, made from six twisted strands.



This 13th century fresco shows Abraham being blessed by a High Priest. While Abraham is shown in the costume of a medieval knight, the High Priest wears his ceremonial robes.

Joseph's Coat

In the Old Testament Book of Genesis, Joseph, the youngest son of Jacob, is described as having a glorious “coat of many colors.” Nobody knows what this coat would have looked like, but it may have featured colored wool dyed sky blue and crimson, as well as the more usual greens, yellows, and browns produced by earth and plants.

Phoenicians

The Phoenicians were a seafaring people descended from the Canaanites (see page 16). From around 1200 BCE they lived along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, setting up great trading ports. For two thousand years the Phoenicians were the most successful traders in the region. As well as their kingdom in the Middle East, they also had colonies along the coasts of Africa and Spain, and in Cyprus, Sicily, and Malta.

Purple People

The word Phoenician is Greek for “purple men,” a name the



Phoenician men wore long tunics with multi-tiered, fringed skirts.

Phoenicians acquired because of their famous purple dye. Made from the murex shellfish, the dye colored cloth a rich, deep purple. Purple cloth from Phoenicia was sold all over the Mediterranean and the Middle East, but it was so expensive that it was usually only worn by royalty.

Stylish Dressers

Phoenician men were stylish dressers, who liked to show off their wealth by wearing colorful clothes. While the ordinary workers wore simple loincloths, rulers and merchants often wore long tunics, with multi-tiered skirts. Each tier was bordered by a fringe. Many Phoenician men wore a conical cap, but those who went bareheaded paid a lot of attention to their hair and beard, which were both carefully curled.

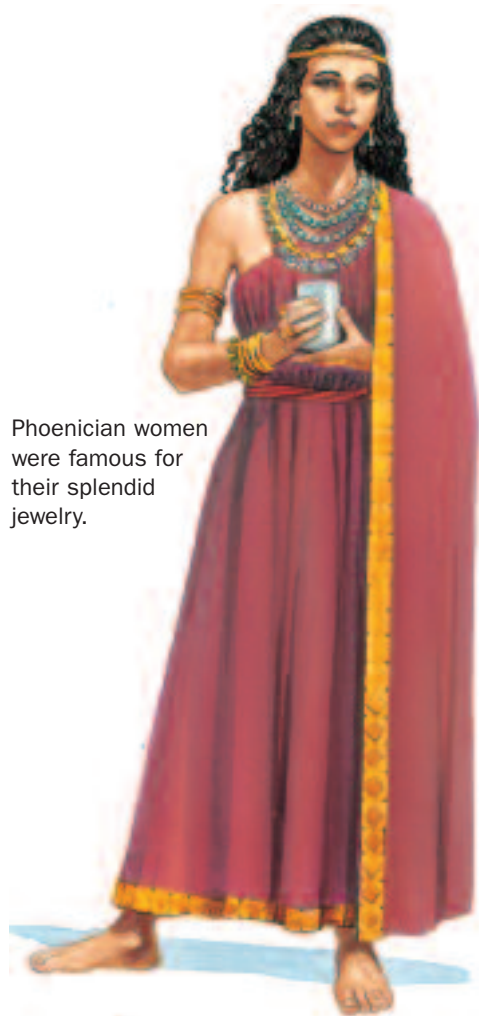
Wealthy men wore jewelry, including broad neck collars similar to those worn by the ancient Egyptians, and simple armlets consisting of a twist of metal wound several times around the upper arm. Merchants and rulers wore finger rings set with semiprecious stones that were engraved with a design, and these rings could be stamped into wax and used as a personal seal.

Gorgeous Jewels

Phoenician women were usually modestly dressed, draping their bodies in folds of cloth. Their hair was often covered by a cap or hood, but sometimes it was simply encircled by a band, below which it rippled freely over their shoulders.

Jewelry was very popular with Phoenician women, who wore a variety of pendants, armlets, bracelets, earrings, finger rings, and brooches. Another type of ornament was the flat, patterned plaque, usually made from glass, with holes in the edges, which was apparently sewn onto clothes.

Often, Phoenician ladies wore three or four necklaces at a time, one above the other—a string of small pearls at the top, then some larger beads, and finally a couple of rows of necklaces with hanging ornaments (similar to a present-day charm bracelet). Some surviving necklaces have up to sixty



Phoenician women were famous for their splendid jewelry.

ornaments made from gold, glass, and precious stones. The ornaments came in an astonishing variety of shapes, including acorns, pomegranates, lotus flowers, miniature vases and cones, and the heads of humans and animals.



A Phoenician glass bead, greatly magnified. Beads like this were traded all around the Mediterranean area.

Glass Beads

The Phoenicians were probably the earliest people to discover how to blow glass, and they made a range of beautiful colored beads. Many surviving Phoenician beads are long and oval in shape and blue-green in color. Others are a deep olive green. As well as making beads from solid glass, the Phoenicians also created tiny sculptures in colored glass. Some of these beads, showing human heads, contain up to five different colors of glass, and are impressively detailed, with tiny coils of glass for hair and beards.

Assyrians



An Assyrian king and queen relaxing in their garden. Both wear golden jewelry and colorful robes covered with embroidered patterns.

The Assyrian people were farmers who came from an area close to the Tigris River in present-day Iraq. From around 1350 BCE they began to conquer new land. Over the next seven hundred years, they built up a large empire which stretched from the Persian Gulf to the eastern Mediterranean, and even reached as far west as Egypt. The Assyrian kings were great war leaders, but they also loved to relax in their beautiful palaces and gardens.

Battle Dress

The Assyrians were expert warriors, who fought with bows and arrows, spears and swords, and long leather



This carved relief from the ancient city of Nineveh shows two armed warriors—one with a bow and arrows and the other carrying a wooden shield shaped like a shallow cone.

Splendid Beards

Assyrian hair and beards were very well tended. A statue of King Ashurnasirpal II (reigned 668–c. 627 BCE) shows his carefully curled, shoulder-length hair and a splendid moustache and beard. The beard is carefully trimmed into a neat rectangle and appears to have bands of horizontal decoration. Other Assyrian statues also feature beards with decorated horizontal bands, and it is possible that the Assyrians' beards were bound or interwoven with embroidered cloth.

slings. Soldiers wore short, belted tunics, leggings, and high leather boots. Some carried round wooden shields into battle and some were protected by an extra leather tunic covered with many small iron plates. Most warriors wore pointed iron helmets with flaps to cover their ears, and some of their helmets were topped with a plume of feathers. Kings rode into battle in a royal war chariot, wearing long robes and a fez-shaped golden helmet.

Horses played an important part in Assyrian warfare and they were also dressed for battle. They wore golden collars with a bunch of scarlet feathers hanging down at the front. The royal horses also had a crown of feathers on their heads.

Palace Life

Assyrian men at court usually wore a close-fitting, short-sleeved tunic, edged with golden fringes. Tunics were usually worn long, but some stopped at the knees and sometimes a fringed shawl was also worn. Except in the earliest examples, Assyrian costumes were lavishly decorated, and the robes of the king were covered

with embroidery. The king wore a golden, fez-shaped crown and wherever he went in his palace, a servant accompanied him, holding a fringed canopy, like a parasol over his head.

The Assyrians were skilled workers in gold, and both men and women wore golden necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. Assyrian noblewomen dressed in a similar way to men, in fringed and embroidered robes and shawls, which covered them from neck to ankle. Both women and men at court wore simple leather sandals on their feet.

Fabrics, Colors, and Patterns

The most common material for clothing was wool, although linen was sometimes used for better-quality garments. Clothes were dyed in a range of colors: pale and deep indigo blue, scarlet, yellow ocher, dull olive green, and purple. All of these colors were also used to dye embroidery wool. Patterns embroidered on Assyrian clothes featured repeated geometric shapes, and often included sacred rosettes and palm trees.

Babylonians

Babylon had a period of greatness during the eighteenth century BCE, when it was ruled by King Hamurabai. However, after 1750, the city gradually declined, and was finally conquered by the Assyrians in 689 BCE. Then, around 620 BCE, the Babylonians began to fight back. By the time King Nebuchadnezzar II came to the throne in 605 BCE, Babylon had taken control of the Assyrian Empire. The Babylonians ruled their empire for the next sixty years, before being conquered by the Persians.

Dress in Babylon

One of King Nebuchadnezzar's greatest achievements was the rebuilding of Babylon. During his reign it became one of the richest cities in the world, full of temples and palaces and home to the famous hanging gardens.

Inside the splendid city of Babylon, the wealthy lived a life of comfort and ceremony. Men and women wore a loose, flowing tunic, with wide half-sleeves, caught in at the waist by a broad, decorative belt. Men carried tall, ornamental staffs and wore a fez-like headdress. Tunics were made from dyed linen, and a second, woolen tunic was sometimes also worn when the weather became cooler. Servants in Babylon wore simple, short, undyed tunics, belted at the waist. One of their tasks was to walk in front of their wealthy masters with a large whisk, driving away the flies!

The people of Babylon were skilled workers in silver and gold, and both men and women loved to wear golden jewelry. A surviving statue of the goddess Ishtar shows her wearing a necklace made from concentric golden rings and two outsize golden earrings—one resembling a bunch of grapes and the other, a shell.

Two Babylonian servants accompany their richly dressed master.



The land of Persia (present-day Iran) was originally ruled by two separate tribes: the Persians in the south, and the Medes in the north. Then, in 550 BCE, the Persians took over the Medes' land and began to conquer all of the surrounding lands. By the year 500, the Persians ruled the largest empire the world had ever seen. The mighty Persian Empire lasted for two hundred years until it was finally defeated by Alexander the Great.

The Persians and Medes wore very distinctive headdresses. While the Persians had tall, fluted hats, the Medes wore a plain, rounded bonnet, with a tail hanging down at the back. Persian men tended to wear their beards long, and often wore golden hoops in their ears.

Soldiers and Satraps

A tiled frieze survives showing Persian soldiers in ceremonial dress. The soldiers wear long, patterned robes, with wide, pleated sleeves. Each soldier wears a wide, golden band encircling his forehead, and carries a tall spear and a bow slung over his shoulder. Attached to each soldier's back is a deep pouch for carrying arrows.

At court, the Persians wore long, flowing robes with pleated sleeves, but the local rulers, known as satraps,



Golden Armlet

The Persians made exquisite golden jewelry. A solid gold armlet has been discovered at Oxus (in present-day Turkmenistan) in a hoard of treasure that probably belonged to a Persian king. The armlet is covered with elaborate carvings and shows two mythical, birdlike creatures, with beaks, ears, horns, and wings, each confronting the other fiercely.

dressed far more simply in short, woolen tunics and long pants. The Persians were great horsemen, and pants were very practical for long horse rides across the plains.

Persian guards with spears and shields, carved on a staircase in the royal palace at Persepolis.



Scythians

One group of people who the Persians never succeeded in conquering were the warlike Scythians. They lived as nomads on the windswept plains north of the Black Sea, in an area that is now Russia. The Scythians spent much of their lives on horseback, herding sheep and cattle. They set up their tents wherever they could find good pasture, and fought fiercely to defend their lands.

Animal Art

Because of their nomadic lifestyle, the Scythians created an art that was easily portable, making intricate golden jewelry and weapons, decorative tent hangings, and carved wooden bowls. They also decorated their clothes and made elaborate trappings for their horses. All these objects were ornamented with swirling animal motifs featuring horses, stags, eagles, bears, snakes, and rabbits.

Scythian warriors carry their dead leader's armlets and robes in a solemn funeral procession. They are wearing distinctive pointed felt caps.

Herders and Warriors

Scythian herders and warriors needed warm clothes that were easy to ride in. They wore leather, fur-lined boots, thick woolen pants, and tunics which wrapped across their bodies and were fastened by a belt. On their heads they wore a thick pointed cap which covered their ears.

When they rode into battle, Scythian warriors wore a protective armor of overlapping metal plates, which covered their upper body and sometimes their legs. Helmets were also made from metal plates. The warriors fought with long-bladed battleaxes and bows and arrows, and they often engraved their arrow cases with animal designs.

Scythian women spent less time on horseback, but they also dressed warmly in long woolen dresses, topped by a belted coat. They wore tall headdresses swathed in scarves.



Splendid Decorations

The Scythians' clothes were made from leather and wool and covered in decoration. Women embroidered elaborate animal patterns in colored wool and also stitched felt appliqué pieces onto dresses, tunics, and coats. Felt was made by pressing and rolling wool and hair until it formed a thick, matted substance which was dyed vivid colors. The Scythians created dramatic appliqué designs on their wall hangings, horse trappings, and clothes, using shapes made from colored felt.

In addition to these decorations, the Scythians also sewed small, golden plaques onto their clothes. These plaques were engraved with animal motifs and must have sparkled dramatically in the sun, especially when worn in combination with elaborate golden belts, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings.



Animal Tattoos

The graves of several Scythian chiefs were excavated in Siberia. The bodies have stayed frozen in the icy ground for thousands of years and still display tattoos on their skin. The tattoos are remarkably elaborate and show swirling designs of interlocked creatures that appear to be a combination of horses, eagles, and stags.

Ceremonial Dress

The Scythians kept their best clothes for special ceremonies, such as the burial of a chief. When a chief was buried, his body was dressed in the most splendid finery and laid on a chariot, which was pulled by a pair of horses in ceremonial dress. The horses were draped in appliquéd hangings and wore golden harnesses and tall, tasseled headdresses. Men in the funeral procession shaved their heads, and some even cut off an ear to show their grief.

The Scythians were expert goldsmiths. This exquisite golden comb, found in a chief's tomb, shows Scythian warriors in battle.

Chapter 4: Civilizations of Ancient Greece

Minoans

The first great civilization in Europe grew up on the Greek island of Crete. The Minoan civilization started slowly, and developed over several thousand years, but by 2000 BCE there were a number of palaces on the island, each ruled by a king. In the warm, sunny Mediterranean climate, agriculture thrived. The Minoans farmed, fished, made pottery, and worked gold.

This fresco from the Minoan palace at Knossos shows a procession of priestesses, all wearing full-skirted dresses with low-cut bodices.



Minoan Dress

Colorful paintings on the walls of the Minoan palaces reveal the sort of clothes that people wore on the island. Minoan men usually wore a simple loincloth or a short kilt made from wool or linen. The kilts dipped down to form a point at the front, and they were often decorated with geometric patterns and a patterned border. Minoan men were usually clean shaven and their hair was worn loose down their backs. They wore golden collars, armlets, and bracelets, and some wore golden bands covering most of their calves.

Minoan women's dress was far more elaborate. They wore brightly colored dresses, with full, flounced skirts, falling in many layers to the ground. The short-sleeved tunic that covered the top of the body had a tight-fitting bodice, cut very low to leave the breasts bare. Minoan women wore golden necklaces and bracelets and left their hair long and loose. They wore tall, conical hats, or more often just a simple headband.

Minotaur Mask?

According to Greek legend, the first king of Crete kept a beast called a 'minotaur' in a huge maze under his palace. This creature had a bull's head and a man's body. Some scholars believe that this legend had its origin in a ceremony performed at the palace, in which the king wore a mask of a bull's head.

Around 1650 BCE the Greek kingdom of Mycenae, in the northeastern Peloponnese, grew very powerful. Mycenae was ruled by several kings, each of whom had his own palace. Inside the palaces were workshops for potters, weavers, and metalworkers, as well as splendid rooms for the royal family. The Myceneans were a warlike people, but they were also great sailors and traders, who imported tin to make bronze for weapons, and gold and amber to make jewelry.

Palace Dress

In the great halls of their brightly painted palaces, the Mycenaean kings and queens held lavish feasts. Kings and nobles wore simple kilts with patterned borders, and usually left their chests bare. Men wore their hair loose, hanging around their shoulders, and held in place by a simple headband.

Mycenaean women wore multicolored dresses, with flared, tiered skirts, and close-fitting, low-cut bodices. Their hair was loosely bound with colorful ribbons, while some locks hung down around their faces. Women wore gold and amber necklaces and bracelets, while men had golden armlets.

Beauty Routine

The famous beauty Helen of Troy was a Mycenaean queen, and surviving murals show that the women of Mycenae were graceful and stylish, with artfully arranged hair. There is evidence that both

women and men spent time and care on their appearance. The Myceneans produced perfumed oils, which they stored in elegant jars. Some oil was traded by merchants, but a certain quantity was kept for use at home. Inside the palaces were small stone tubs, and part of a lady's beauty routine would probably have involved soaking in a tub and then rubbing scented oil into her skin.

Both men and women in the Mycenaean cities cared a great deal for their appearance, and the women were famous for their beauty.



Mycenean Warriors

War was a central part of Mycenaean life. Kings and nobles trained for battle, and musicians sang songs about great victories. When a Mycenaean city went to war, the king and his nobles rode in battle chariots, while the ordinary soldiers marched on foot.

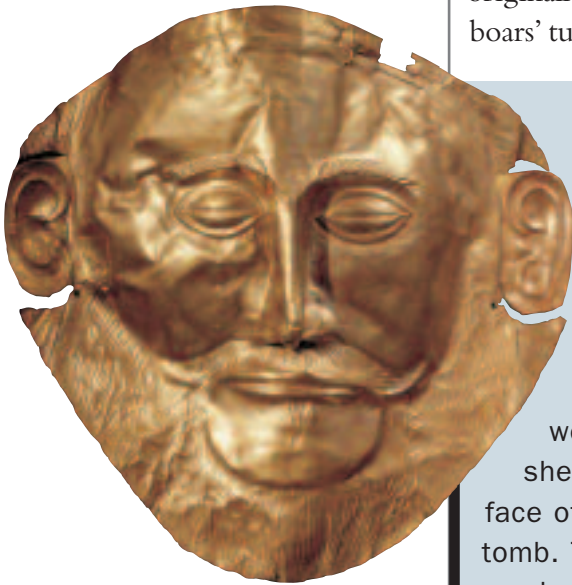
Most of the army wore simple kilts and relied for their protection on helmets and shields. Helmets were usually fairly plain—a pointed bronze cap with flaps for the ears, topped by a flowing horsehair plume. The king, however, wore a helmet with a curved horn at the front. One remarkable helmet has been found that was originally constructed from dozens of boars' tusks laid side by side.

Shields were made from ox hide stretched over a wooden frame. Some shields were shaped like a solid figure eight, while others, known as “tower shields,” were tall and rectangular and bowed in at the sides. Occasionally, a warrior wore a complete suit of armor made from bronze, but these were very heavy and rigid, and probably uncomfortable to wear.

Warriors fought with shields, swords, and daggers, and some of these weapons were beautifully decorated. One dagger found in a king's grave has a solid gold hilt and a blade inlaid with a scene in gold, silver, and copper, showing leopards hunting in the forest.

Death Mask

The Myceneans created gleaming golden death masks for their kings. The masks were made by beating a sheet of gold over a carved wooden mold, and the sheet was then laid over the face of the dead ruler in his tomb. The most famous of these masks was discovered by the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s. At first Schliemann believed that he had found the body of King Agamemnon of Troy, one of the major figures in Homer's *Iliad*, but it was later proved that the mask belonged to one of the earliest Mycenean kings.



The golden death mask of an early Mycenaean king, found by the archeologist Heinrich Schliemann.



Most Mycenaean warriors did not wear body armor, but relied on their large shields for protection.

By around 800 BCE the ancient Greeks were living in city-states. There were around three hundred city-states in total, but the two most powerful ones were Athens, in eastern-central Greece, and Sparta, in the south. Gradually, Athens gained in wealth and power, and by the fifth century BCE it had become the center of a thriving Greek civilization.

Ancient Greek society had an elite of wealthy, well-educated people. They created fine art and great buildings, studied mathematics and medicine, and discussed political ideas. There were also priests, soldiers, farmers, traders, and merchants. The lowest class, comprising about a quarter of the population, were slaves.

Making Clothes

Most women in ancient Greece knew how to spin wool and weave it into cloth, and a Greek wife was expected to provide all the cloth for her family. Some women did all of their household spinning and weaving themselves, but rich women often had slaves to do the work instead. One famous example of a virtuous Greek woman is Penelope, the wife of the hero Odysseus, who kept busy with her weaving for twenty years, while Odysseus was away on his adventures!

Once the wool was spun, it could be colored using natural dyes made from plants, insects, and shellfish. Women wove their thread on a tall, upright loom and sometimes included

Arachne the Weaver

Spinning and weaving were so important in ancient Greece that many myths and stories grew up about them. One story told the legend of Arachne, a very skilled weaver, who was turned into a spider by the goddess Athena because she dared to challenge Athena to a weaving contest.

patterned borders in their cloth. Geometric shapes were very popular, and mythological creatures also featured in borders. Greek clothes were usually made from wool, although some women wove thread from flax to make linen cloth. From the fifth century BCE onward, a few very rich people wore garments made from imported silk or cotton.

A woman weaving woolen cloth on a vertical loom. Most women in ancient Greece wove the cloth for their household.



Fashion in Ancient Greece

In the warm, dry climate of Greece, people did not need many clothes. Both men and women wore a simple tunic, and added a cloak for cooler weather. Tunics and cloaks were held in place by pins or brooches, which could be plain or very elaborate. Usually people went barefoot, but sometimes they wore simple leather sandals.

The basic dress for women was the chiton. It was made from a single piece of rectangular cloth, fastened at the shoulders and left open at one side. A girdle was also tied at the waist to hold the chiton in place. There were two main styles of chiton. The Doric chiton was a sleeveless tunic, while the Ionic chiton had elbow-length sleeves, which were fastened at intervals across the shoulders. Over the chiton, women wore a himation. This was a rectangular wrap, which could vary in size and weight, from a light scarf to a warm traveling cloak.

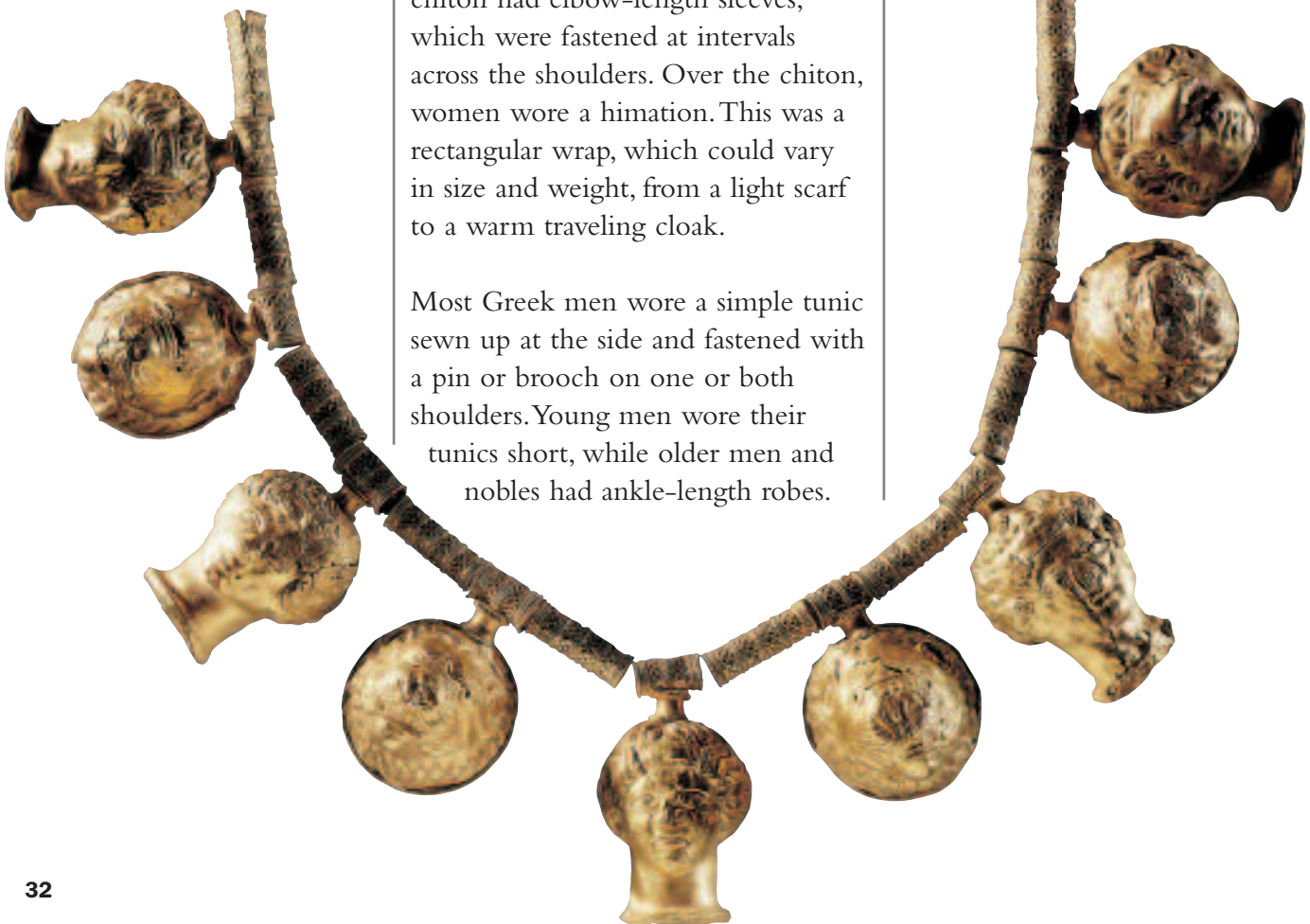
Most Greek men wore a simple tunic sewn up at the side and fastened with a pin or brooch on one or both shoulders. Young men wore their tunics short, while older men and nobles had ankle-length robes.

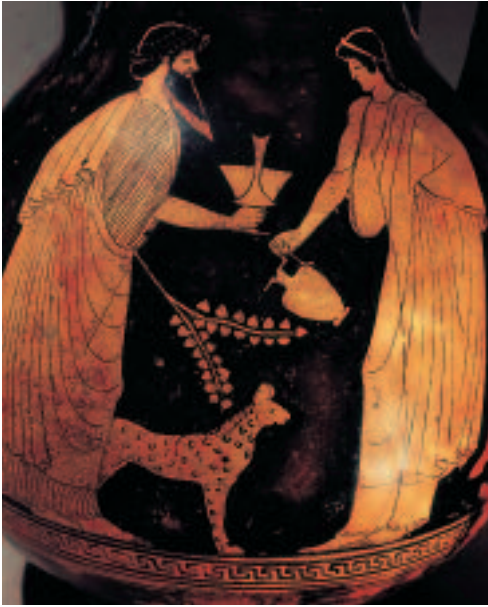
Craftsmen, farmers, and slaves often wore a loincloth. Sometimes men wore a himation, which they wrapped around the body with one end thrown over one shoulder. This could be worn on its own or as a second garment over a tunic.

Jewelry

The Greeks liked to wear delicate earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. Wealthy Greeks wore jewelry made from gold, silver, and ivory, while the poorer people's jewelry was made from bronze, lead, and bone. Jewelers sometimes added enamel for color, but precious stones were only used at the end of the Greek period.

This impressive necklace would have been worn by a wealthy woman. It is made from solid gold.





A couple exchanging gifts, painted on a Greek vase. The wife wears a chiton while her husband wears a flowing robe with the end draped over his shoulder.

Hairstyles

In the early Greek period, both men and women wore their hair long and loose, held in place by a simple headband. However, from around 500 BCE onward, men's hair became much shorter, and their beards were neatly trimmed, while women usually wore their hair up, bound by several ribbons and scarves. From around 300 BCE men shaved off their beards and wore their hair cropped close to their heads. Meanwhile, female

hairstyles became extremely elaborate, and women often waved or curled their hair.

Beauty Care

Women in ancient Greece spent a lot of time and effort making themselves look beautiful. They would bathe frequently and rub perfumed oils into their skin to prevent it from drying out. Women also used oil on their hair to make it shine. Some women dyed their hair and wore wigs or false hairpieces, while others used padding to improve their figure, or wore thick-soled sandals to make themselves look taller. Many Greek women wore makeup. They whitened their skin with special creams, darkened their eyebrows, and used rouge on their cheeks.



Looking and smelling good was very important to the Greeks. Here, a wealthy woman massages oil into her hair, while her servant holds the oil jar.

Spartan women

In the warlike city-state of Sparta, women looked and behaved very differently from their counterparts in the rest of Greece. Spartan women were encouraged to spend most of their time outside, exercising and playing sports to make sure that they had robust, healthy babies. Statues of Spartan women and girls show that they were very strong and muscular. Usually they wore a knee-length dress, with a loose skirt to allow plenty of movement. One statue even shows a Spartan girl wearing a thigh-length tunic with a high slit in one side.

Greeks at War



This detail from a Roman mosaic shows Alexander the Great dressed in the armor of a Macedonian general. Alexander wears a metal breastplate with wide shoulder straps, and a lightweight cloak fastened at the neck. His breastplate has a decoration in the form of a head—possibly the god of war.

The ancient Greeks were often at war. For eleven years they fought against the Persians, and there was also a long war between the rival city-states of Athens and Sparta. In 338 BCE the Greeks were conquered by their northern neighbor, the kingdom of Macedonia, led by King Philip II. When Philip died in 336, his son, Alexander the Great, became the leader of the Greek army and led a force of Macedonians and Greeks on a campaign to win a vast empire in Asia and the Middle East.

Each of the main fighting groups—the Greeks (led by the city of Athens), the Spartans, and the Macedonians—had their own distinctive battle dress.

Greek Hoplites

The backbone of the Greek army was its company of heavily armed footsoldiers, known as hoplites. Hoplites fought with a long spear and a sword and carried a large circular shield made from bronze, wood, and leather, with a bold design painted on it. They wore a short tunic and their upper body was protected by a bronze and leather

A Question of Dress

After Alexander the Great had defeated the king of Persia in 331 BCE, he took control of the great Persian Empire. During this period the chroniclers relate that Alexander abandoned his traditional Macedonian dress and adopted instead the dress of the Persians, wearing a loose tunic and pants (see page 25). This infuriated Alexander's Macedonian generals, who were intensely proud of their kingdom's military history, which they saw as represented by their dress.

breastplate. Bronze leg guards, known as greaves, covered the soldiers' calves, and they wore sturdy leather sandals on their feet. The hoplites had magnificent bronze helmets with a horsehair crest and flaps to protect the sides of the face.

Running in Armor

The ancient Greeks loved to hold athletic competitions, in which men competed against each other in sports such as jumping, boxing, and wrestling. The most famous competition of all was the Olympic Games. Most Olympic sports were performed by naked athletes, but in one running race the competitors had to wear heavy armor. Each of the runners wore a bronze helmet and greaves and carried a heavy shield. The origins of this race probably lay in the strict training of the Greek hoplites.

Spartan Warriors

All the men of Sparta were full-time soldiers. At the age of seven, boys were taken from their mothers to begin their military training. Spartan warriors dressed in a distinctive way, with long, scarlet cloaks and helmets which covered almost all of the face. The Spartan soldiers also let their hair grow long, so that it streamed out from under their helmets. The overall effect could be very fearsome when they advanced *en masse* in battle.

Alexander's Armor

Alexander the Great was one of the finest generals the world has ever

known. When he led the Greeks into battle, he wore the traditional armor of his native kingdom of Macedonia: a short-sleeved battle tunic with a metal breastplate and a skirt and sleeves made from metal strips.

Alexander rode an enormous charger and fought with a long sword. On his feet he had calf-length boots and he wore a purple cloak to show his royal status. In most of the surviving statues and mosaics, Alexander is bareheaded, but one statue shows him as a fierce conqueror, wearing a lion's head with its paws tied under his chin.

Greek hoplites depicted on a vase from the sixth century BCE. The Hoplites all wear splendid, crested headaddresses and carry circular shields—each with its own distinctive design.



Chapter 5: The Roman Empire

Ancient Romans

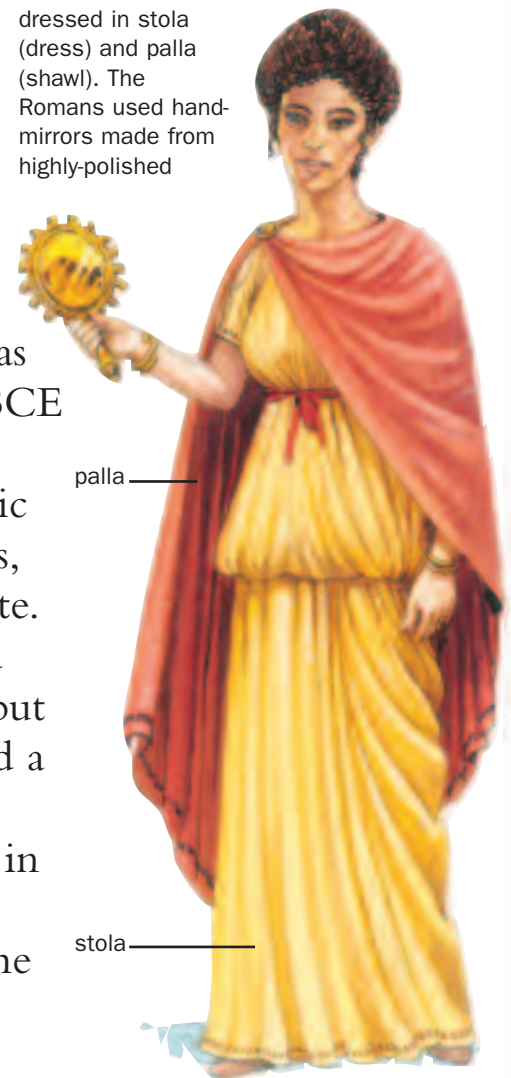


In this mosaic from the fourth century BCE the Roman poet Virgil is flanked by two muses (goddesses of inspiration). Virgil wears a toga looped over one shoulder.

At first the city of Rome was ruled by kings, but in 509 BCE the last king was driven out and Rome became a republic ruled by two elected consuls, who were advised by a senate. In 45 BCE a general named Julius Caesar seized power, but he was soon assassinated, and a period of conflict followed until Augustus took control in 27 BCE. Augustus was the first Roman emperor, and the empire lasted for the next four hundred years.

The Roman Empire began as a small community of farmers living on the banks of the Tiber River in Italy. Gradually, the farming villages grew into a town and then into a city.

A Roman woman dressed in stola (dress) and palla (shawl). The Romans used hand-mirrors made from highly-polished



Augustus and his successors conquered vast areas of land, creating an empire that stretched from Britain in the north to North Africa in the south. Wherever the Romans conquered, they established the Roman way of life, building fine cities with temples, baths, and theaters. Governors were sent from Rome to rule over the provinces, and many of the conquered peoples adopted Roman ways, even dressing like the Romans.

Making Clothes

Most Roman clothes were made from wool, which was spun and woven by hand at home or in a workshop. In towns and cities, Romans took their woolen cloth to the fuller's workshop to be cleaned and treated before it was made into clothes. First, the cloth was stiffened by soaking it in urine, and then it was cleaned by rubbing it with a kind of clay. After this, the cloth was beaten, stretched, and bleached. Fullers also cleaned and mended clothes for the richer people.

Sometimes the Romans had clothes made from linen, which came from Egypt. The wealthiest wore clothes made of cotton from India and silk from China.

Togas and Tunics

The basic garment for men was a simple, belted tunic made from two rectangles of wool stitched together. Tunics were usually made of unbleached wool and reached to the knees. Under their tunics men wore a

loincloth made from a strip of wool or linen. They also had a simple cloak, which could be wrapped around them or fastened with a brooch at the neck.

Important men wore a toga over their tunic. This was a very long strip of woolen cloth, wrapped around the body and draped over one shoulder. However, the toga was very heavy and awkward to wear, so it was only worn for special occasions. Togas were usually plain white, but those worn by senators had a broad purple border. Until they were sixteen, boys from wealthy families wore a white toga with a narrow purple border.

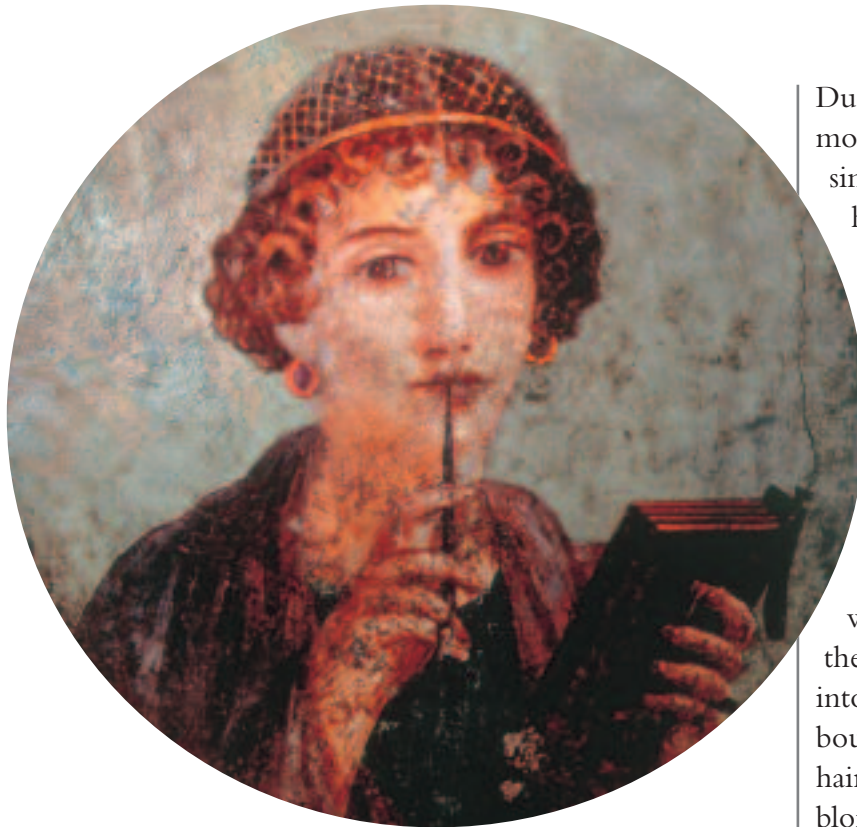
Roman Rings

Roman men and women wore a lot of rings. Rich people had rings made from gold and silver and set with precious stones such as emeralds, pearls, or amber. Less wealthy people wore rings made from bronze. Often a ring held a gemstone engraved with a pattern that could be used as a seal.

Women's Clothing

Roman women wore a long, belted, sleeveless dress called a stola. Over this was a large, rectangular shawl, known as a palla, which could be worn draped around the shoulders or looped over the head like a hood. Under the stola women wore a loincloth and sometimes a simple leather bra. Girls wore white until they were married, but after this they often wore brightly colored dresses.





This young woman wears simple gold earrings in her ears, while her carefully curled hair is held in place by a delicate lattice-work cap.

Hair Care

Most Roman men kept their hair short, either combed forward or curled. They were usually clean-shaven, although the emperor Hadrian (reigned 117–138 CE) started a fashion for beards. Most men began the day by visiting the barber's shop for a shave, and some had the hair removed from their arms and legs as well. This could be a painful experience because barbers did not use soap or oil.

False Teeth

Many Romans suffered from tooth decay, and sometimes dentists took drastic action. They extracted rotten teeth and supplied false ones to fill the gaps. False teeth were made from ivory or bone and were attached to a gold band that would not rust.

During the period of the republic, most women wore their hair tied in simple buns at the back of their heads, but by the time of the empire some very elaborate styles had developed. Wealthy women's hair was curled and braided and piled into elaborate styles, held in place with dozens of pins.

For special celebrations, wealthy women wore wigs, and brides wore several hairpieces for their weddings. Some women cut off their slaves' hair and had it made into wigs or hairpieces. Others bought wigs made from imported hair. Black hair came from Asia, while blond and red hair was imported from northern Europe. Some Romans used a brown hair dye made from walnut shells and wild onions. Others tried to prevent their hair from going gray by applying a paste of earthworms and herbs!

Makeup

Most wealthy Roman women relied on cosmetics to make themselves look beautiful, and slaves devoted hours each morning to making up their mistresses. It was very fashionable in Roman times for women to look pale, so women whitened their faces and arms with powdered chalk or a poisonous mixture made from lead. They darkened their eyebrows and eyelashes with soot and wore eye shadow made from ash or saffron. Color was added to lips and cheeks using red ocher, plant dye, or even the sediment of red wine.

As well as applying makeup, Roman women liked to treat their skin with a variety of creams. They applied facials of bread soaked in milk and even used a cream made from crushed snails. Perfumes were very popular, and women kept their cosmetics and scent in delicate glass pots and bottles.

Roman Baths

Very few Roman houses had bathrooms, so most people visited the public baths. However, a visit to the baths was much more than a chance to get clean. Like modern health clubs, Roman baths offered the chance for a total exercise and beauty routine. Many Romans began their

visit to the baths with a session in the exercise yards, where they could practice weightlifting, wrestling, or ball games. This could be followed by a period in the *sudatorium*—a hot, steamy room, like a modern-day sauna.

In the *caldarium*, or hot bath, the Romans smeared their bodies with perfumed oil and then scraped off the dirt with a curved stick called a *strigil*. After this they visited the *tepidarium*, a lukewarm pool where they could cool down, and then perhaps enjoy a massage. The whole experience ended with a refreshing dip in the *frigidarium*—the unheated, outdoor swimming pool.

A surviving Roman bath from the city of Bath, in southern England. (Only the lower section dates from Roman times.)



Roman Actors

Throughout the Roman Empire, companies of actors performed plays to entertain the people. These plays were usually solemn tragedies about heroes and gods, or knockabout comedies about ordinary people. All the parts were taken by men, and the actors wore distinctive costumes and masks to help the audience understand their roles in the play. Roman drama had its origins in the plays of the ancient Greeks, and Greek and Roman actors wore very similar costumes and masks.

Costumes

Roman plays were usually performed in huge, outdoor theaters, with rows of seats built in a high circle around a central stage. Because of the vast size of these theaters, the actors had to be

easily visible. They wore exaggerated masks and large wigs, and many actors added extra padding under their costumes to give themselves more bulk. The actors playing women used special padding to give them a more female shape.

Costumes were fairly simple and usually consisted of a tunic and cloak, which were short for men and long for those playing women. The colors of an actor's clothes helped to identify his role in the drama, so tragic characters wore dark robes, while happy characters had brightly colored costumes. As well as the individual actors, most plays featured a chorus—a group of actors who all spoke at once. Members of the chorus also wore costumes and sometimes even dressed as animals or birds.

Two Roman actors' masks from a mosaic. The mask on the left would be worn by a comic character, while the one on the right represents a pale-skinned maiden.



Masks

In addition to their costumes, the actors wore masks to help the audience recognize what kind of character they were playing. The masks had exaggerated features which showed the character's sex and age, and whether they were humans or gods. Female masks were much paler than male ones and had bigger eyes. There were special masks for recognizable character types such as the "wise old man," the "fool," the "innocent maiden," and "the scheming slave." During the course of a performance, an actor might wear several masks, swapping perhaps from a smiling to an angry mask to indicate that his character's mood had changed.

Actors' masks were usually made from stiffened, painted linen, and they were lightweight, but very hot. They had holes for the eyes and a very large hole for the mouth, which helped to amplify the actor's voice so that he could be heard by everyone in the theater.

Actors' Shoes

Ancient Greek and Roman actors sometimes wore special shoes to make them seem taller. These shoes were made from wood and had thick soles and a high heel. The shoes had no left or right and looked the same from both sides.



A Roman legionary



The Roman Army

In the early republic, Rome did not have a professional army, because in times of war, all male citizens were expected to fight. The men had to provide their own weapons and equipment and then return home when the fighting was over. By the time of the empire, however, the Roman army had become an extremely efficient fighting force. Soldiers were well-paid professionals who wore regulation armor and weapons.

The Roman army was divided into legions—groups of around six thousand men. Within the legions, most men fought as legionaries, or foot soldiers, while a smaller group of mounted soldiers formed the cavalry. Marching at the head of the legion was the *aquilifer* or standard-bearer. Roman legionaries wore short tunics and leather sandals studded with nails. They fought with daggers, swords, and javelins and carried a large wood and leather shield. An iron helmet protected their head and

Useful Shields

While the shields of the Roman cavalry were flat and oval, the legionaries' shields were rectangular in shape and bowed outward. The shields were made in this distinctive shape so that the legionaries could form a cunning formation. Groups of soldiers advancing toward the enemy locked their shields together to form a solid barrier that covered the soldiers' heads and also protected the front and sides of the group. This well-protected shape was known as the *testudo*, or tortoise, and it allowed the legionaries to approach very close to the enemy before launching their attack.

they also wore a breastplate made from metal strips.

Standard-bearers led their legion into battle, so they had to be easy to spot. As well as their basic armor, they wore a dramatic headdress made from the head and front paws of a lion, and carried a tall staff topped by a golden emblem of an eagle.

Another dramatic figure on the battlefield was the *cornicene*, or horn player. He blew battle signals, using a large, circular trumpet, and wore a striking costume made from a bear's head and skin.

Each Roman legion was divided into many smaller groups, and each group had its own commander. The most important commander was the legate, who was in charge of the whole legion and wore a golden helmet topped with eagle's wings. The least important was the centurion, who commanded a group of around eighty men. The centurion wore similar armor to the legionary, but his shins were protected by metal plates called greaves, and he wore a plumed helmet on his head.

Gladiators

The Roman emperors paid for dramatic and bloodthirsty shows to entertain the people of the city. Known as “the games,” these shows were held in massive stone stadiums, such as the Colosseum in Rome. One of the most popular games was the gladiator fight. Gladiators were slaves, criminals, or prisoners of war,

who were forced to fight each other to the death.

Most gladiators fought with very short swords. They wore simple loincloths and went bare-chested, although they did wear a helmet and carry a shield. One type of gladiator, called a *retiarius*, fought with a net and wore no armor at all.



This mosaic shows two scenes of gladiators fighting. The figure on the left in both scenes is a *retiarius*, who fights with a net.

Barbarians and Celts

Although the Romans were very successful at conquering the peoples of Europe, there were some tribes who resisted them. The Roman army fought constant battles with the Celtic people, while tribes of Germanic people from northeastern Europe launched frequent attacks on the empire's borders.

Barbarian Warriors

By the third century CE attacks on the Roman Empire by Germanic tribes were growing more serious.

A Frankish warrior, armed with his throwing axe, known as a *francisca*.



The Romans called these tribes “barbarians” and fought fiercely to keep them out of their lands. Eventually, however, Rome was invaded by barbarians, and in 476 the Roman Empire collapsed in western Europe.

Rome was threatened by many warlike tribes, but one of the most terrifying were the Franks, who originally came from Germany. Frankish warriors carried circular wooden shields and fought with spears and lethal throwing axes called *francisca*s. They wore rough coats made from furs, short tunics and leggings, and boots cross-laced around their calves. However, the most striking aspect of the warriors’ appearance was their hair. This was worn in a pigtail at the front, and shaved at the back with an extra topknot of hair sprouting from the top of the head.

Celtic People

The people known as the Celts were made up of many different tribes, but they all shared the same language and way of life. The Celtic culture began in Austria around 800 BCE, and the Celts gradually spread across most of Europe, settling as far north as Scotland and as far south as Turkey. As the Roman Empire grew, the Celts fought hard to defend their lands, but in the end most of them were conquered. However, Celtic culture survived in Ireland and remote parts of Scotland and Wales, while in Cornwall and Brittany some Celtic traditions remained.

Celtic Dress

Celtic men wore short, belted tunics and baggy pants tied at the ankle with strips of leather, while women wore long dresses with belts. Both men and women often wore chunky neckbands, known as torcs, made from twisted bands of gold.

In battle, Celtic warriors wore bronze helmets, which were sometimes crowned with horns or animal ornaments. They carried bronze shields, fought with spears, and blew on tall war trumpets decorated with animal heads. To make themselves appear more intimidating to their enemies, some Celtic warriors stripped to the waist and painted their bodies with swirling patterns, using a blue dye called woad. They also combed lime through their hair to make it stand up in spikes.



Celtic warriors usually wore thick woolen clothes with bold patterns of checks and plaids.

Celtic Metalwork

The Celts were skilled metalworkers who made strong weapons and tools. They also created beautiful cups, shields, and items of jewelry from bronze, silver, and gold. Some of these objects, dating from around two thousand years ago, are decorated with intricate swirling patterns, and the same sort of patterns appeared much later in Celtic medieval art.

A Celtic bronze shield dating from around 350 BCE.

Checks and Plaids

Celtic clothes were woven from wool and dyed bright colors, and often featured patterns of stripes, checks, and very simple plaids. These simple designs were probably the origin of the traditional plaid patterns later used in Scottish kilts.



Chapter 6: Peoples of the South and East

Ancient India

India has a rich early history. The Indus valley civilization, which flourished between 2600 and 2000 BCE, was larger than any other empire of the time. The Aryan people, who arrived in India around 1500 BCE, introduced the religion of Hinduism, while Buddhism also began in India around 500 BCE. The Gupta Empire of the fourth to the sixth centuries CE is famous for its painting, music, and dance.

People of the Indus Valley

The first civilization in India grew up around the valley of the Indus River around 3500 BCE. Within a thousand years there were over a hundred towns and cities in the Indus valley. The farmers there were the first people to grow cotton and weave it into cloth for clothes. Meanwhile, in the towns and cities, metalworkers and bead makers made headbands, armlets, and necklaces. Beads for necklaces were made from gold, clay, and semiprecious stones. Some pottery beads were modeled in the form of tiny animals.

Clothes for Castes

The Aryan people, who arrived in India around 1500 BCE, introduced a caste system in which people were divided into different classes according to the jobs they did. Children always belonged to the same caste as their parents, and each caste wore different kinds of clothes. The main castes were: the workers,

who wore a simple tunic and turban; the merchants, who dressed in more colorful robes and wore golden jewelry; the warriors and kings, who wore magnificently patterned robes and turbans and masses of jewelry; and the priests and scholars, who usually dressed very simply in a loincloth, with their hair knotted behind their head.

Buddhist Monks

Around 528 BCE Prince Siddhartha Gautama gave up his worldly riches and became the Buddha, a wandering holy man who dressed very simply and had almost no possessions. The Buddha attracted many followers who wished to live like him, and he gave precise instructions about their robes. These robes have been worn by Buddhist monks from the sixth century BCE right up to the present day.

Buddhist monks have a “triple robe,” which consists of: a waistcloth, wrapped around the body like a



Buddhist monks today still wear the same traditional saffron robes that they wore in the sixth century BCE.

sarong; a robe; and an outer robe, which is only worn in cold weather. Monks' robes can be dyed from roots and tubers, plants, bark, leaves, flowers, and fruits, and these natural substances produce a range of colors from deep red to yellow. The most common color for Buddhist robes is a yellowish-orange, or saffron.

The Gupta Empire

The Gupta emperors ruled from 320 to 550 CE, and encouraged art, science, and trade. Textiles were a major source of wealth for the empire, and large quantities of silk, cotton, linen, and muslin (a very fine cotton) were produced to be traded abroad.

While the ordinary people in the Gupta Empire wore simple clothes made from cotton, kings, princes, and princesses had splendid clothes and jewelry. A set of famous Buddhist murals painted at Ajanta during the

Guptas' rule portray a group of exquisite dancing maidens, laden with jewels. The dancers wear flowing robes of the finest muslin. Around their necks, waists, arms, and legs are strings of pearls, beads, and jewels. Some have golden, jeweled headdresses rising in points, while others are bareheaded with jewels and flowers woven into their hair.

The Tilaka

Ever since the Aryan period, Hindu women have worn a mark called the tilaka on their foreheads. It is usually made from a mixture of red ocher powder and sandalwood paste and is a visible sign that a person belongs to the Hindu religion. According to ancient Hindu tradition, the tilaka began in Aryan times when the bridegroom used his thumb to apply his blood to his bride's forehead as a recognition of their marriage.



Ancient China

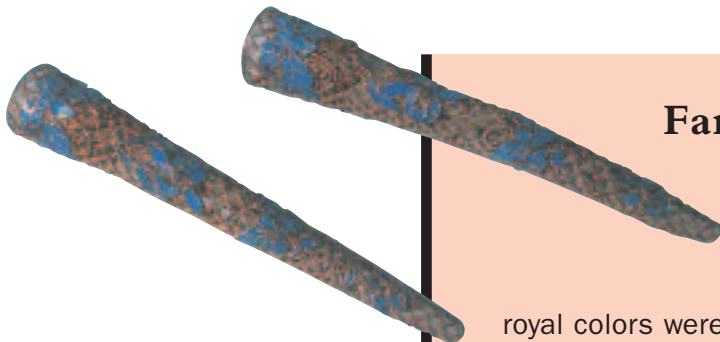
Around 5000 BCE people began farming along the banks of the Yellow River. After a thousand years, farmers began to grow rice, and around 2700 BCE they discovered how to make silk. From that time on, wealthy people in China wore exquisite robes woven from this material.



Making Silk

Silk thread is produced by silkworms that spin their thread into tightly bound cocoons. The ancient Chinese discovered that if they soaked these cocoons in hot water, the threads would loosen, making it possible to unwind the silk thread onto a stick. Once the thread was collected, several strands were twisted together to make threads thick enough for weaving. By creating threads of different thicknesses, the Chinese could weave a range of different silk cloths, from light gauzes to heavy brocades.

Chinese nobles wore colorful silk robes covered with embroidery.



These nail protectors were worn by a Chinese empress over her six-inch-long fingernails.

Fancy Fingernails

Around 3000 BCE wealthy people in China began to paint their fingernails. The colors used depended on rank. China's early rulers wore gold and silver nail polish, but by the time of the emperors the royal colors were red and black. Well-manicured nails were a symbol of a high social position. They emphasized the difference between the nobility and the workers, who had to labor with their hands.

Silk was woven on looms to make fine cloth, but was also used for embroidery thread. The Chinese soon learned to embroider exquisite patterns onto silk cloth, often using a contrasting color. Some silk was made into beautiful clothes, and some was taken by merchants who traveled to the West, where silk sold for enormous prices. Soon, Chinese silk was so famous that the trading route that ran across Asia to Europe became known as the Silk Road.

Emperors and Nobles

In 221 BCE Qin Shi Huangdi established China's first empire. He established a pattern of living very grandly, and the emperors that followed him built magnificent palaces where they lived with their courtiers. Emperors and nobles wore wide-sleeved, flowing silk robes, which crossed over at the front and were fastened by a high belt. The robes included long, trailing sashes and were covered with embroidered designs. Emperors and nobles often wore their beards and moustaches long. Emperors had elaborate caps decorated with tassels, while nobles usually wore their hair tied in a topknot and covered with a small, silken cap.

Working Dress

The Chinese had strict rules about dress. No merchants were allowed to wear silk, and farmers and craftworkers dressed very simply. Some wore cotton loincloths, while others had loose tunics and pants. On their feet they wore sandals made

from rushes or straw. In the warm, wet south, peasants working in the fields wore wide-brimmed, cone-shaped hats to protect them from the sun and rain.

Chinese Warriors

The enormous tomb of the first emperor of China contains more than seven thousand life-sized model warriors, placed there to guard his body. Made from terracotta and originally brightly painted, the warriors wear knee-length tunics. Some warriors have their hair tied in a topknot and wear a simple headband, but the officers sport elaborate bonnets with two wings at the top that tie under the chin. Some of the warriors carried real crossbows, which were set to fire if anyone dared to enter the tomb.



One of the thousands of terracotta warriors guarding the first emperor's tomb. This figure originally held a real weapon.

Ancient Japan

The earliest people in Japan lived as hunter-gatherers, hunting, fishing, and collecting nuts and berries. Then, around 500 BCE, settlers arrived from China and Korea. They brought new skills, such as metalworking and farming, and people began to live in tribes, ruled by chieftains. One tribe, called the Yamato, became more powerful than all the others, and around 500 CE they took control, becoming the first emperors of a united Japan.

Yamato Emperors and Warriors

The Yamato emperors ruled until around 700 CE. During their rule, many new ideas, such as writing and



A miniature terracotta soldier from a Yamato emperor's tomb.

silk-making were brought over from China. People in ancient Japan probably dressed in the same way as the ancient Chinese, with farmers wearing simple tunics and pants, while richer people wore fine robes made from silk.

The best evidence for ancient Japanese costumes comes from the burial mounds of the Yamato emperors. Here, archaeologists have found bronze mirrors, bells, swords, and spears. They have also discovered clay models of warriors, placed around the burial mound to protect the emperor's body. These miniature figures are dressed completely in armor that seems to be made from metal strips. The armor consists of: a helmet with long side flaps meeting under the chin; a long, waisted jacket tied at the front with laces; and wide pants. The warriors wear gauntlets and have swords in scabbards on their belts.

Swords, Jewels, and Mirrors

An ancient Japanese creation myth provides some insight into the things that were considered important in early Japanese society. According to this myth, the sun goddess Amaterasu sent her grandson Ninigi to rule over Japan, giving him a sword, a jewel, and a mirror. These three gifts became symbols of the emperor's authority. They are said to be still owned by Japan's ruling family.

Australia and the Pacific

During the last Ice Age, adventurous groups of people from Southeast Asia began to journey in boats. They rowed south across the Pacific Ocean, which was much smaller than it is today because large amounts of land were covered in ice. Some people settled on islands in the South Pacific, and some reached as far as Australia. Very much later, around 750 BCE, a group called the Maoris arrived in New Zealand.

Pacific Islanders

The people who settled on the Pacific islands wore skirts made from dried grasses and necklaces made from shells, feathers, and teeth. They may have decorated their faces and bodies with body paint or tattoos, like the Maoris. They may also have worn small carvings as good-luck charms.

Australian Aboriginals

The aboriginal people of Australia first arrived on the continent around 40,000 years ago, and gradually spread out all over Australia. In the cooler regions, the aboriginals wore animal skins to keep warm, but in many parts of Australia there was no need for clothes.

The early aboriginals painted their bodies with patterns using pigments made from ochers, white clay, and charcoal. Both men and women wore a range of ornaments made from natural materials such as bark, teeth, and feathers, or carved from wood. Aboriginal hunters used boomerangs, clubs, and spears, and defended themselves with wooden shields, which were decorated with carvings or paintings.

Dreamtime Patterns

All the patterns used in aboriginal body painting have traditional meanings. They show figures and events from the Dreamtime, a period when their world was created by the Spirit Ancestors, according to aboriginal belief.

Today, some Australian aboriginals still paint their bodies with the same designs that their ancestors used thousands of years ago.



Chapter 7: People of the Americas

North America

During the last Ice Age, Asia and America were linked by a bridge of land and ice. Hunters from northern Asia followed herds of buffalo until they arrived in the northwestern tip of America. Then, very gradually, over thousands of years, people spread out all over the continent. In each area where they settled, the Native Americans established a different way of life.



Traditional Inuit dress is made entirely from animal skins and fur. It must have stayed unchanged for thousands of years.

Arctic People

By around 12,000 BCE people had settled in the frozen Arctic regions. These early ancestors of the Inuit people lived by hunting seals and walruses, fish, and birds. Like their Inuit descendants, the people of the Arctic must have used animal skins to make hooded coats, pants, mittens, and boots. They also carved ornaments from walrus tusks. A miniature ivory mask survives from around 500 BCE, which may have belonged to a chief or a priest.

Hunters of the Plains

It is thought that the first people arrived in the Great Plains area around 10,000 BCE. The people of the plains hunted buffalo for food, and hunters disguised themselves by wearing the skin of a wolf or a buffalo. Like the later people of the plains, the early buffalo hunters must have used buffalo hides to make tipis and clothes. The early plains dwellers probably also held

ceremonial dances, when some of them dressed as buffalo.

Mound Builders

Around 500 BCE a people called the Adena flourished in southern Ohio. Evidence of these people, including small burial mounds, has been found in the Scioto River valley. They were succeeded around 300 BCE by the

Early Basketmakers

In the hot, sandy deserts of the southwest, people learned to weave baskets from plant fibers. From the first century CE these desert people, usually known as the Early Basketmakers, used their weaving skills to build conical homes in the sand, and also made baskets to be carried on their backs. Some baskets were lined with gum from plants so they could hold water.



These Native American buffalo hunters, painted in the nineteenth century, wear clothes made from leather and feathers. Their ancient ancestors probably dressed in a similar way, though they may not have ridden horses.

Hopewell, another great mound-building civilization, who flourished until the sixth century CE. Over time, the Hopewell people built larger burial mounds, until they had become substantial, circular burial chambers. Inside these chambers, archaeologists have found copper bracelets, necklaces made from shells and alligator teeth, wooden masks, and carved wooden pipes.

The Hopewell people were great traders who exchanged goods with tribes as far away as the Rocky Mountains and the Gulf of Mexico, and brought back copper, silver, mica, and quartz. Hopewell craftworkers made copper sheets into designs such as flying birds. They also cut out shapes, such as hands and claws, from

mica sheets. No one knows the function of these small, flat ornaments, but they may have been worn as pendants, or sewn onto clothes.

The Adena and Hopewell people probably lived in a similar way to the later tribes of the northeastern woodlands. These people were hunters and gatherers who wore loincloths, cloaks, and moccasins made from leather and decorated with dried seeds and feathers. They painted patterns on their skin and wore feathered headdresses on their heads. In their ceremonies they smoked tobacco from a carved pipe which was passed between them, and they also held dances in which some tribe members wore carved wooden masks.



The Hopewell people made fine jewelry using a wide range of natural materials. This necklace was made from pearl beads gathered from freshwater shellfish, while the pendants and earrings were fashioned from beaten copper.

South America



A Chavin figurine of a wild cat. This solid gold ornament may have been worn by a ruler or a priest.

The Paracas people mummified their rulers and buried them in fine woolen garments. This Paracas burial cloak and headdress were made from dyed and embroidered wool.

People of Peru

People began to settle on the rocky coast of Peru around 12,000 BCE. At first, they survived by catching shellfish and crabs and gathering nuts and berries, but by about 2000 BCE they had learned to grow crops. The Peruvian farmers grew maize, squash, beans, and potatoes, and also cotton for spinning and weaving. They kept

llamas, alpacas, and guinea pigs for their meat and wool, which was used to weave blankets and cloaks.

Between 1800 and 900 BCE the Chavin people created the first civilization in South America. They were skilled stoneworkers who built huge temples filled with carvings of their fierce animal gods. The Chavin people settled in the long coastal strip which is present-day Peru and influenced the culture of the whole area. Chavin culture disappeared around 200 BCE, but other groups grew up, including the Paracas cultures in the south, and the Moche in the north.

Chavin Gold

Little evidence remains of Chavin clothing, but they were the first people in the Americas to work gold. Chavin goldsmiths made intricate figurines and pendants covered with expressive carving. These ornaments show a range of animal spirits, including jaguars, eagles, alligators,



Backstrap Looms

Portraits of weavers on ancient Moche pots reveal that the people of the Andes used a simple backstrap loom to weave their patterned cloth. The warp strings of the loom were attached at one end to a high post. At the other end the strings were tied to a strap that went around the weaver's back. Whenever the weavers wanted to tighten their threads, they simply leaned back against the strap. These portable looms could be set up anywhere and are still used today in Peru.

crabs, and shellfish. In addition to the figurines, wide gold collars and pectorals have also been found in Chavin temples. All of these splendid ornaments were probably worn by Chavin rulers and priests.

Paracas Cloth

The Paracas people, who flourished in the southern Andes from around 600 BCE to 400 CE, are famous for their weaving and embroidery. Weavers used fine alpaca wool to make spectacular cloaks and burial cloths in a range of vivid colors. Some surviving Paracas cloth has geometric figures and motifs woven into it, while some is decorated with embroidered designs. The cloth is brightly colored with dyes, including turquoise, scarlet, and jade green. Designs include a range of animal motifs, such as alpacas, birds of prey, jaguars, and snakes. Sometimes weavers combined the forms of several creatures into a complex intertwined design. Semi-human deities are also shown, displaying a mixture of human and animal features.

One surviving Paracas textile has a recurrent design of flying figures, apparently wearing ceremonial dress.



The figures wear short, decorated kilts with elaborately patterned belts. Around their ankles are feathered leg bands, and hanging around their necks are square, woven bags. Each figure carries a baton and a fan, and wears a simple headdress of two horizontal bands topped by a design of an animal's face.

A Paracas llama-wool textile used to wrap the body of a mummified ruler. The figures on this embroidery may represent warrior priests.

Sacred Gold

All the ancient people of the Andes worshiped the sun god, and gold was especially prized because it was associated with the sun god's life-giving power. For their special ceremonies, Moche lords were festooned with golden jewelry and also wore a cotton cloak covered with gilded plates. When a Moche lord appeared on the top of his pyramid, glittering in all his finery, he personified the god of the sun.



This “stirrup vase” made by the Moche people shows a laughing man wearing a simple cotton cap.

Moche Lords

Between 200 and 800 CE, the Moche lords ruled over a coastal kingdom in northern Peru. Most of the Moche people lived in small farming or fishing villages clustered around tall pyramids where the lords had their palaces. The Moche lords conducted solemn ceremonies and led their warriors into battle. They also supervised the work of skilled craftspeople who worked in clay, textiles, and metals.

Moche Jewelry

Metalworkers smelted gold, silver, and copper in small furnaces and used stone hammers to flatten the metal into thin sheets. From these they fashioned gleaming headdresses, face masks, nose rings, earrings, pectorals, and pendants. Moche jewelry was often covered with fine engravings and sometimes inlaid with turquoise, shell, and lapis lazuli.

Portraits in Clay

Moche lords commissioned skilled potters to make bowls, pots, and vases, painted with designs in red, white, and earth colors. Many of the pots feature painted figures and scenes, while some “stirrup vases” take the form of human figures. Moche pottery reveals a fantastic range of costumes: lords adorned with face paint and wearing feathered headdresses, warriors in patterned battle tunics and headdresses, and ordinary people in cotton tunics and caps. One surviving pot even shows a man washing his hair with coca leaves.

Central America

Olmecs

The first major Central American civilization emerged around 1500 BCE in the humid, swampy lands around the Gulf of Mexico. Here, the Olmec people built a series of ceremonial sites on low hills. The two major sites were San Lorenzo and La Venta. Each contained a complex of temple platforms and pyramid mounds and a court for a sacred ball game.

The Olmecs were the first of a series of peoples that flourished in Central America, and many aspects of their culture were adopted by later groups, including the Maya people (see pages 58 and 59).

Olmec Carvings

Olmec craftspeople created masks and figurines from jade, obsidian, and serpentine, which were possibly worn as pendants. These carvings featured eagles, serpents, and jaguars, and also semi-human figures with snarling jaguar faces.

Olmec sculptors also carved a set of giant stone heads, which are probably portraits of leaders. Each of them wears a distinctive helmet-like headdress with straps around the ears. Some have a decorated badge at the center of the forehead.

Sacred Ball Game

As part of their religion, the Olmecs played a sacred ball game on a stone court. Players hit a rubber ball with their arms, hands, and hips, and at the end of the game one team was put to death.

Carvings show that the Olmec ball-game players wore a protective helmet, similar to the headdress of their rulers. They also wore a large chest ornament and a high-cut loincloth with a wide, padded waistband. Later, the Maya also played a sacred ball game, and their players wore a similar costume.



A colossal stone head from San Lorenzo, Mexico. Carved heads like these were probably intended as portraits of rulers.

The Olmecs and the Maya played a sacred ball game. Players had special loincloths and helmets and wore large ornaments on their chests.





This painting shows a range of Maya costumes. The figure on the left carrying a bundle is probably an ordinary farmer. The two central figures may be courtiers, while the dark figure in the feathered headdress (top left) is a warrior.

Maya

Around 300 BCE the Maya people started building stone cities deep in the rainforests of Central America. Each Maya city was filled with temples and palaces and was ruled by a powerful king. The palaces and pyramids of the Maya cities were covered with sculptures of their gods and rulers. The Maya also produced painted pots and manuscripts, which offer a wealth of evidence about the way they looked and dressed.

Maya Beauty

The Maya people had flattened foreheads that sloped backwards, giving their faces an oval, egg-like shape. This shape was achieved by binding the skulls of babies while their bones were still soft. Maya

nobles also filed their teeth into different shapes, and built up the bridge of their nose with clay to make a long ridge that extended right up to the middle of the forehead. Hair was sometimes worn over the forehead and cut in uneven, squared-off locks.

Kings and Queens

Maya kings and queens wore amazing costumes. The kings wore patterned tunics with elaborate belts and large pectorals featuring images of their gods. They also wore decorated armbands, tasseled leg bands, and pendulous earrings. On their heads they had a towering headdress that frequently featured an animal's head. The Maya queens'

clothes were equally dramatic. They wore long cloaks and dresses, heavy golden neck collars, intricate earrings, and tall and elaborate crowns.

Ordinary people wore a basic, cotton loincloth, and a simple cap on their heads. They also wore chunky beads, armbands, and earrings.

Maya Warriors

In battle, Maya warriors dressed to scare their enemies. They wore huge, spiky headdresses and went into battle shouting, blowing long trumpets, and pulling frightening faces. Warriors defended themselves with shields and fought with long spears, but they aimed to take their prisoners alive, rather than kill them. The fiercest warriors of all were the jaguar knights. Their tunics, headdresses, shields, and spears were all decorated with jaguar skin, and their headdresses were shaped like a jaguar's head.

Imitating the Gods

The Maya worshiped dozens of gods and held many ceremonies to please them. As part of these ceremonies, priests and kings wore costumes and headdresses representing their gods. The most important of all the gods was the sun god, and when the Maya kings were buried, they wore a mask showing the sun god's face. These royal burial masks were usually made of jade, the Mayan's most precious material, which they associated with everlasting life.

Quetzal Feathers

Most of the ancient peoples of Central America worshiped the serpent god Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl was half snake and half Quetzal bird, and the feathers of the Quetzal bird were considered sacred. Like other Central American peoples, the Maya used the long, green tail feathers of the Quetzal bird in the headdresses of their rulers and priests.



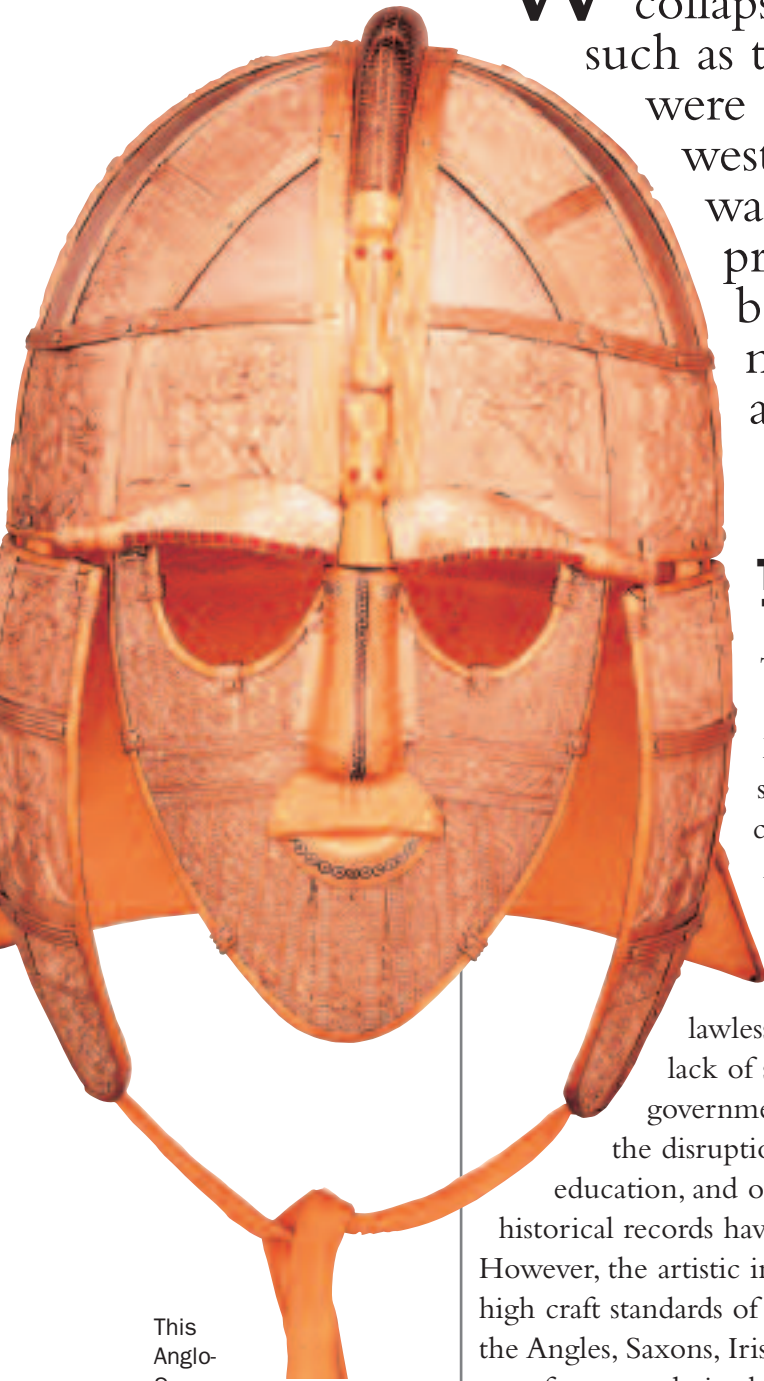
A Maya warrior painted on a vase. This portrait shows very clearly the backward-sloping forehead which the Maya people considered very beautiful.



Chapter 1: Europe 500–1000

Raiders and Riders

When the Roman Empire finally collapsed in 476 CE, Germanic tribes such as the Angles, Saxons, and Franks were already invading much of western Europe. The incomers were warriors and their dress was practical, designed for riding and battle, for farming, or for building new settlements, rather than for affairs of state, business, or leisure.



This Anglo-Saxon ceremonial helmet, from Sutton Hoo in England, dates from about 625. It shows Roman influence in its design.

Troubled Times

The early Middle Ages in Europe have sometimes been called the Dark Ages. There was almost constant warfare, lawlessness, and a lack of stable government. This led to the disruption of education, and only limited historical records have survived.

However, the artistic inspiration and high craft standards of peoples such as the Angles, Saxons, Irish, or Vikings, seen for example in their surviving jewelry, suggest that this age was far from barbaric.

Kingdoms and Empires

In eastern and central Europe, there were invasions by Slavs from southern Russia, and Magyars (Hungarians) from Asia. However, the city of Constantinople or Byzantium (modern Istanbul), capital of the Byzantine Empire, did not fall to invaders. The empire offered all the pomp and glitter of an imperial court and provided a living for all sorts of people, including officials, lawyers, teachers, merchants, priests, laborers, and organizers of horse races.

By the seventh and eighth centuries, new, small kingdoms were being founded across western Europe, and in 800 the Frankish ruler Charlemagne was crowned ruler of an empire which stretched from the Pyrenean Mountains, on the borders

of Spain, to central Europe. Western Europe, now mostly Christian, was becoming a more settled society.

The Social Background

To understand how people dressed in the Middle Ages, we need to know how society was organized. The feudal system was developing at this time—a social order based on oaths of service. Kings granted large areas of land to their nobles in return for their loyalty and military support. Workers promised to supply labor, military service, and produce to the nobles in return for military protection or a roof over their heads. Increasingly, the superior status of the nobles was emphasized by their dress, quality of cloth, and styles of fashion.

Early Medieval Textiles

Woolen cloth was processed by hand. Raw wool was carded (combed out) and then wound onto a handheld cleft stick, called a distaff. From here it was drawn out with the fingers onto a drop spindle, a suspended rod about eight inches (20 cm) long, fitted with a disk called a whorl. The whorl kept the spindle revolving evenly. The pull of gravity drew the thread downward as it was twisted by the spindle. Thread could then be wound into a skein, for coloring with natural dyes.

The woody stems of the flax plant were stripped, dried, and then soaked in water to extract the fiber inside. This could be spun and woven to

make linen, which was cooler and smoother than wool. Another plant, hemp, could be processed to make a cheaper, scratchier cloth, sometimes used by poor people. Cotton was still a rare import for most of Europe.

A reconstruction at Jorvik, the Viking settlement of York, in England, shows the vertical warp-weighted loom in use at the time.

A Viking Loom

The Vikings were Scandinavian sea raiders, who attacked and settled the coasts of western Europe in the ninth century. Their looms, or weaving frames, leaned upright against the walls of their houses. The upright, or warp, threads were kept taut at the base by stone or clay weights and were separated by a horizontal bar called a heddle. The horizontal, or weft, threads were passed through the gap in the warp and then beaten upwards with a long batten made of wood, iron, or whalebone. Weaving was done in the home.



State and Church

The Frankish emperor Charlemagne, who lived from 747 to 814, is shown here both as crowned head of state and as a man of action.



The Byzantine emperor Justinian I, who died in 565, wears a crown with pendants and a purple robe.



The warrior bands of the early Middle Ages would be led by a chieftain or warlord, who might own better weapons or armor than his followers, but who wore no special clothes to indicate his rank. However, when kingdoms and empires were founded, the descendants of those chieftains had much grander ideas of their own importance. The tombstone of Cadfan, seventh-century ruler of Gwynedd, a small kingdom in North Wales, describes him as “the wisest and most renowned of all kings.” The high status now enjoyed by even minor royalty was reinforced by their costume.

Crowned Heads

The royal crowns of the early Middle Ages derived from royal circlets or diadems worn in Persia, which were adopted by the Byzantine emperors and empresses. These crowns included pendants, jeweled pieces hanging down on each side of the face. Kings of the Visigoths, a Germanic people who ruled Spain in the 600s, wore circlets of thick gold set with pearls and precious stones. Two centuries later, Charlemagne’s crown was made up of gold plaques set with sapphires and emeralds and decorated with enameled figures from the Bible. Many crowns were topped with crosses, emphasizing that the king ruled by the will of God.

Robes and Jewels

Western European kings looked eastward to the splendor of the Byzantine Empire. Its powerful emperor wore a long under-tunic with a looser, shorter outer tunic. The cloth was of silk, embroidered with gold thread. The Byzantine empress wore a long tunic with a richly embroidered collar and stole, studded with gems. As in ancient Rome, purple was the color reserved for the imperial family. Other European rulers also began to wear long robes for state occasions, and decorated their clothes with jewels.

Regalia

Medieval rulers wore or carried all sorts of emblems, called regalia (royal things), to emphasize their status as representatives of the state. These included cloaks, rings, scepters, orbs, swords, bracelets, gloves and, most importantly, crowns. The full royal costume would be worn at coronations and important state occasions. Medieval kings were frequently in the saddle, hunting or fighting battles, and at such times their long robes would be replaced by more practical tunics, cloaks, or shirts of mail.

Religious Dress

Early Christian monks and priests wore similar tunics and cloaks to everyone else. However, religious costume, like royal dress, soon developed symbolic meanings. In Rome and Constantinople, bishops and popes dressed to show that their authority came from God. Their dress



became very grand. Wide, T-shaped tunics called dalmatics were of the same design as those worn by kings for their coronations. Bishops in the Celtic Church wore crowns. Clergy wore long, white tunics called albs beneath sleeveless mantles called chasubles. Long stoles or scarves would be embroidered with the sign of the cross.

The appearance of the clergy led to many heated debates in the early Middle Ages. Monks in the Catholic Church of Rome shaved a circular patch from their hair as a symbol of the crown of thorns worn by Jesus. However, monks in the Celtic Church shaved a band across their hair from ear to ear, a custom which probably dated back to the druids, the Celtic priests of the pre-Christian age. The Catholic Church ruled that this tonsure (method of shaving) was unholy. Between the seventh and twelfth centuries the Celtic Church was absorbed into the Roman tradition.

Deacons of the Church lead the Byzantine empress Theodora (500–548) to worship. She wears a crown and imperial robes under a gem-studded collar.

Chieftains, Lords, and Ladies

In the early Middle Ages the upper classes were chiefly distinguished by the quality of the cloth they wore, by embroidered hems and cuffs, and by fine dyes. Broad bands of color were popular among nobles of northern Europe.

Tunics and Trousers

The linen or woolen tunic was the basis of dress across most of Europe for all social classes and both sexes. The long tunics and robes of the Roman Empire were still seen at the royal court or in church, but shorter, knee-length tunics were now worn by noblemen, often with breeches. These might be bound around the calves with crisscrossed thongs or worn with knee-length laced boots or shoes of soft leather.

Most noblewomen also wore tunics, with designs that varied with time and place. In seventh-century Spain

Byzantine noble, 600



the tunic might be more like a dress, shaped and close-fitting with long sleeves. In eighth-century France a looser, calf-length tunic, with three-quarter-length sleeves, might be worn over a long shift. Long stoles or scarves could be draped gracefully over the shoulders or head. Noblewomen wore delicate shoes of soft leather or embroidered linen.

Girdles and Cloaks

Tunics for both sexes were generally gathered with a girdle or belt, which might be a strip of fancy leather or embroidered cloth. Men might wear an ornate buckle or a sheath for a knife on their belt, while a woman's girdle often supported a satchel, as there were no pockets in their garments. Sometimes women wore a broad sash around the hips, knotted and hanging down at the front.

Byzantine Silks

Silk was the most luxurious cloth of all. The breeding of silkworms and the spinning and weaving of this shimmering textile had originally been a secret of the Chinese, but had gradually spread southward and westward across Asia. The Greeks and Romans knew about silk, but the first serious attempt at creating a European silk industry began at Constantinople in the reign of Justinian I (c. 482–565 CE). Manufacture took place under high security, within the palace walls, and was of a very high standard. The best quality cloth was reserved for the emperor, but the courtiers also wore fine silk. Manufacture and trade were strictly controlled by the imperial court.

French
lady, 850



Even the finest palaces of the early Middle Ages were drafty places, and the wooden halls of a prince or chieftain in northern Europe must have been bitterly cold in winter. Warm cloaks of wool, fur, or hide were a necessity.

Jewelry

Cloaks for men and women were generally fastened at the shoulder or the chest by a round brooch secured with a long pin. The brooch was often the most elaborate and beautiful item worn. One of the most splendid examples is the “Tara” brooch, made in Ireland in the early eighth century. It is crafted from silver, bronze, glass, and amber, and even the back of the brooch—which would not have been seen when worn—is as lavishly decorated as the front.

Brooches, buckles, pins, necklaces, and earrings of this period show a

Anglo-Saxon
noble, 950



high degree of craftsmanship. The Viking chieftains of the ninth century had some very fine examples made for themselves, and they also traded or plundered jewelry on their sea voyages. Hoards of Viking treasure, buried for safekeeping, reveal high-quality gold jewelry from all over Europe and the Middle East.



Enamelled brooch used to fasten cloaks. It was found in the bed of the River Shannon, in Ireland.

Working Clothes

In the Roman Empire, most laborers and slaves wore knee-length tunics, the most practical dress for plowing, fishing, or building a house. For greater mobility, the hem of the tunic could be drawn through the legs and tucked up into the belt, similar to a baby's diaper. This continued to be normal working dress during the early medieval period in southern Europe.

Cloths and Dyes

Tunics for slaves, or the poorest in society, were made of the coarsest woolen, linen, or hemp cloth. These were undyed. However, middle-class people, such as merchants, wore homespun cloth of a better quality. This might be dyed with the extracts of flowers, leaves, roots, or bark. Natural dyes included a plant called woad, which gave a blue color; a wildflower called weld, or dyer's

rocket, which produced yellow; and madder, an evergreen shrub of the Mediterranean region, whose root produced a crimson dye.

Heavy-duty Clothing

The waterlogged clay of northern Europe required heavier plows than the lighter soils of the south. Northern farming was generally muddier, wetter, and colder, so people dressed accordingly. As well as the tunic, short breeches or longer trousers were generally worn, the latter often tied with thongs. Shoes of calfskin or goatskin were tightened with leather laces. Soles would be replaced when worn out, and sometimes shoes were fitted with wooden soles, like clogs. Knee-length boots and gaiters tied to linen trousers were also worn, although bare legs and feet were common among the poorest citizens.

Women at Work

A woman's work in a ninth-century Viking settlement was fairly typical of this age. It might include cooking, fetching water, and looking after livestock. When summer came and the men sailed off to raid foreign shores, the women stayed behind to run the household and often the farm as well. A lot of time was spent spinning, weaving, and making clothes for the family. A Viking woman would wear a long shift of wool or linen, with a sleeveless woolen tunic over the top. This was secured with shoulder straps fastened by brooches. Keys, pins, or other useful items were often kept on



A simple tunic remained the working dress of the plowman during most of the Middle Ages.

chains which hung from these brooches.

Everyday Accessories

Clothes were not made with pockets. Instead, pouches or purses of cloth or leather were attached to belts in order to hold money, hair combs, or other small or precious items. Not all jewelry was made of costly silver or gold. In northern Europe, antler horn, walrus tusk, bone, wood, glass beads, and stones such as jet, readily found on some beaches, were made into very beautiful ornaments.

Hats were a rare sight in the early Middle Ages. Simple cloth caps in the “Phrygian” style of the ancient Greeks were sometimes worn. These were conical, with the peak flopping



forward in the front. There were also broad-brimmed straw sunhats.

Viking women's dress was home-made, simple, practical and often colorful. Hair was worn long or tied back. Married women wore headscarves.

All Wrapped Up

Most people who wished to protect themselves from rain or snow would simply raise their cloaks to cover their heads. The cloak could also be wrapped around the body to serve as bedding for a weary traveler or a Viking seafarer. Woolen cloaks soon became soaked through with rain or spray, but cloaks of hide could offer some waterproofing. Iceland, colonized by Vikings in 874, became famous for exporting shaggy woolen cloaks. In eastern Europe, Bulgarian sheepskin coats became popular, worn with the fleecy side against the body.



Viking shoes were generally made of goat- or calf-skin and were either slippers or laced around the ankle.

Dressing for War

This decorative helmet, with an iron cap, would have been a highly prized possession. It was found in a burial at Vendel in Sweden, and probably dates from the second half of the seventh century.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west, large standing armies rarely took to the battlefield. Much of the military action was now carried out by small, mobile bands of mounted warriors. Most were ordinary working people who owed allegiance to a local chieftain or lord.

They wore simple jerkins or tunics with breeches. A leather belt carried a scabbard for the sword. Little armor was worn. Some stitched metal plates onto their clothes for protection, but only the leaders owned helmets or mail shirts. The early Franks piled up their hair in braids to provide padded protection for their heads.

It was much the same with the Viking raiders of the ninth century.

Their simple, conical helmets were made of iron or hardened leather. Some had nasals (bars to protect the nose). A few leading warriors had helmets with cheek guards or ornate protection for the face. The elite Viking shock troops were known as berserkers, or “wearers of bearskin shirts.” They would work themselves up into a blood-crazed frenzy before battle. We still talk of people in a rage “going berserk.”

Armies of Empire

The more orderly, large-scale military activities familiar to the ancient Romans lived on in the Byzantine Empire, which succeeded in recapturing former Roman territory in Italy and North Africa. However, the old Roman-style legions—large units of well-trained professional soldiers—had been disbanded. The Byzantine Empire was really a land of merchants, and its rulers preferred to hire mercenaries to



Shirts of Mail

Mail was a form of armor invented by the Celts sometime before the fifth century BCE. The Roman legions, who adopted the use of mail, called it *macula* (mesh), and this became the French word *maille*. Mail was made up of small, interlinking iron rings, riveted or pressed together and shaped into shirts, and later other forms of garment. In the early Middle Ages only a few warriors could afford shirts of mail, but from the ninth century onward it became increasingly common.



fight for them rather than raise their own armies. The Byzantine foot soldiers wore scale armor—tunics of sewn metal plates—over breeches. By the reign of Basil II (976–1025), the emperor was protected by an elite bodyguard of Rus (Swedish Vikings who had settled in Russia). They were known as the Varangian Guard and wore elaborate armor.

In the early ninth century, the armies of the Frankish emperor Charlemagne marched into battle wearing tunics with cloaks or kilts, similar to the style of the old Roman legions. Their helmets were either rounded or conical with a ridge along the crest.

Rise of the Knight

In the eighth century, a new invention called the stirrup reached Europe, which had originated three centuries earlier in China. By securing a horse rider's foot, the stirrup allowed him to stay in the saddle during the shattering impact of a cavalry charge. By the tenth century, heavy cavalry was becoming increasingly important in

warfare. The age of the knight was about to begin, and with it would come many social changes. These altered the way people dressed, and not just on the battlefield.



Carolingian soldier,
c.800



Angevin knight,
c.1125



Sub-Saharan Africa

The chief centers of textile production in medieval Africa were Egypt and the northwest, or Maghreb. In the chiefdoms and kingdoms to the south of the Sahara Desert, the textiles, body decorations, and costumes were often very striking.

In the West African kingdom of Benin, masks like this one were worn at the hip by rulers during certain ceremonies.



Wearing Masks

In West and Central Africa, masks were worn for all kinds of religious rituals, such as fertility or harvest dances, coming-of-age ceremonies, and funerals. The masks mostly represented spirits rather than human forms. They were made of carved and painted wood, feathers, raffia, shells, fur, ivory, or metal and usually formed part of an elaborate costume.

Beyond the Sahara

As trade expanded southward across the Sahara during the Middle Ages, camel caravans brought cottons and silks to the rising states of West Africa. The arrival of Islam in this region brought with it flowing robes in the Arab style. Native textile industries developed in the medieval city-states of the Hausa people, in Ghana, and in the Mali and Kanem-Bornu empires. A uniquely West African weaving tradition evolved in these places, in which strips of beautifully patterned cotton are sewn together.

Kano, a Hausa city founded in 999 CE, soon became famous for its cotton textiles and also for its leather, exporting hides to the Maghreb. Its medieval dye pits, which used indigo to color the dark blue cotton robes of desert traders, still exist today.

On the East African coast and islands, people also adopted Arab cotton robes, wove cloth, and imported Asian textiles from across the Indian Ocean.

Fur, Hide, and Raffia

Across Africa, people wore or traded the pelts of wild animals, such as leopards. The bravery and status of warriors might be emphasized by headdresses made of lion manes or other evidence of hunting prowess. Short kilts, tunics, and cloaks for both sexes were often made of wild animal or cattle hides. The bark of certain trees could be soaked and beaten into a fine cloth. Grasses,

leaves, and fronds, such as those of raffia palms, were used to make skirts or other simple coverings.

Body Art

Many African hunters and gatherers went naked most of the time, but decorated their bodies, faces, or hair with reddish earth (ocher) or white wood ash. It is clear from surviving medieval statues and carvings that the decorative scarring of faces or bodies was widespread. The marks often indicated status, sex, clan, or tribe. Teeth filed to a point were a mark of beauty to some peoples, as extended earlobes were to others.

Necklaces and Anklets

Necklaces, collars, earrings, armbands, and anklets were commonly used across medieval Africa. They might be made of copper, gold, iron, ivory, bone, wood, or cowrie shells. Copper was

the most highly valued metal in the early Middle Ages, later overtaken by gold.

Royal and Ritual Dress

Many African rulers wore or carried regalia to indicate their royal status. These included elaborate headdresses, feathers and plumes, crowns, scepters, collars or necklaces, gourds, and weapons. African religion was based on a belief in spirits of nature and magic, and in honoring the spirits of one's ancestors. Traditional curers, guardians of shrines, ritual dancers, or members of secret cults often wore special costumes and masks, representing the power of birds, animals, or spirits. The costumes might be made of straw, feathers, hide, or fur. Boys and girls undergoing rituals to mark the coming of adulthood also had to wear special costumes, body decorations, or headdresses.

Cloth is still dyed with indigo in medieval pits at Kano, in what is now northern Nigeria. This Hausa city, founded in 999, was a center of textile production in the Middle Ages.

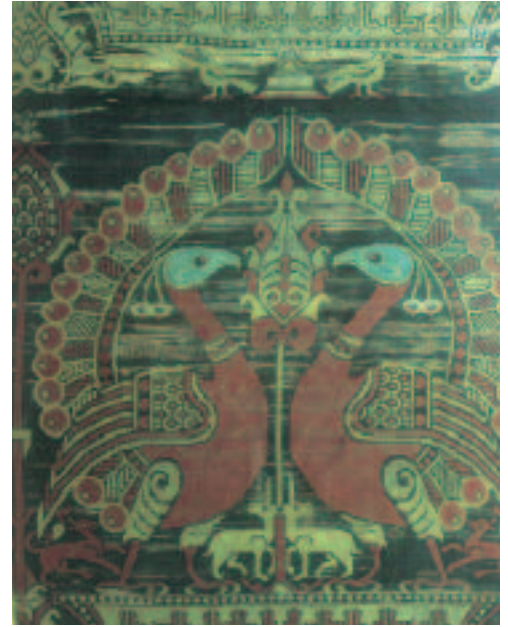


The Arab World

In this portrait, a Libyan horseman in the desert is robed much as his medieval ancestors would have been.



During the Middle Ages, the Arab world stretched from Spain through North Africa and the Middle East. Textiles were woven by desert nomads as well as in the cities, and cloth was one of the most important trading items. Fabrics included wool, cotton, linen, and silk, and Morocco was famous for its leatherwork.



Moorish Andalusia became a source of rich silk textiles used in regalia and vestments in southern Europe.

Influences on Dress

Two main factors influenced Arab dress. One of these was climate. Heat and desert sand encouraged the wearing of loose-fitting robes, often white to reflect the sun, and of veils or scarves to protect the head and face. Cotton was the ideal fabric for such clothing. However, during cold nights and windy or wintry weather, woolen robes or cloaks were also worn.

The other factor influencing Arab dress was the Koran, or Islamic scripture. The Koran orders men to dress modestly, with tunics no shorter than the knee and no longer than the ankle. Women were also expected to dress modestly in loose robes. Fitted clothes, jewelry, and tattoos were frowned upon.

Damask and Muslin

The influence of the Arab world on textiles is shown in words we still use for certain types of fabric. Damask takes its name from Damascus, in Syria. It is a reversible fabric made most often of silk or linen. A pattern is woven into the cloth which is revealed by the way in which light falls upon the fabric. Muslin takes its name from Mosul, a town in present-day Iraq. It is a fine, gauzy cotton.

Men's Dress

Arab men might wear loose, knee-length breeches as underpants, beneath a long tunic. Sleeves could be wide or narrow. Over this might be worn a jacket or an open-fronted robe called an *aba*. Sleeves for both men and women were often sewn with a decorative band called a *tiraz*. At first these were worn only by caliphs (rulers), but later they were adopted more widely. They were often embroidered with religious inscriptions, calling down the blessings of God upon the caliph. Hair was worn short, and older men always wore a beard. A skull cap was worn on the head, and around this would be wound a long turban.

Arab warriors in the Middle Ages often wore tunics and boots. Over this they might put on a quilted, padded jacket or perhaps a shirt of mail or scale armor. A cotton robe (the “surcoat” adopted by European

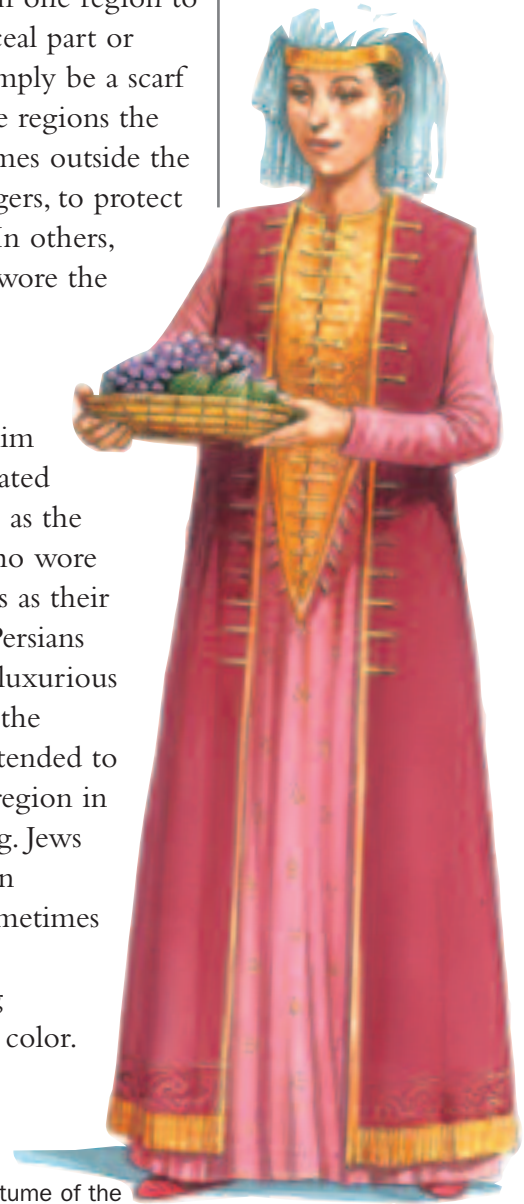
knights) was sometimes worn over everything. A conical helmet, often with a turban wrapped around it, protected the head. A leather belt carried the sword.

Women's Dress

Arab women also wore loose tunics and robes, sometimes over tight trousers. The practice of wearing a veil varied greatly from one region to another. It might conceal part or most of the face, or simply be a scarf over the head. In some regions the veil was worn at all times outside the house or among strangers, to protect the wearer's modesty. In others, Muslim women only wore the veil for worship.

Non-Arabs

The lands of the Muslim Arabs were also populated by other peoples, such as the Berbers and Kurds, who wore much the same clothes as their Arab neighbors. The Persians tended to favor more luxurious silks and jewelry than the Arabs. Jewish citizens tended to wear the dress of the region in which they were living. Jews and Christians living in Muslim lands were sometimes ordered to identify themselves by wearing turbans of a particular color.



This woman wears the costume of the Ottoman Turkish court at the end of the medieval period. Unlike most Arab women, she is unveiled.

Turks and Mongols



A Seljuk Turkish warrior preparing to shoot an arrow from his lightweight bow.

The steppe grasslands of Central Asia were home to the Turkic-speaking peoples and tribes. One Turkic group, the Seljuks, ruled large areas of western Asia from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. They were followed by the Ottomans, Muslim Turks who seized land from the Byzantine Empire. By the end of the medieval period, the Ottoman Empire included large areas of the Middle East and North Africa.

Turkish Warriors

Like all Central Asian warriors, the Seljuk Turks were great horsemen and archers. Illustrations show them wearing knee-length breeches and pointed slippers, quilted jackets, shirts of mail or scale armor, sashes, and round caps. They carried small bows and quivers of arrows, round shields, and a kind of slashing sword which developed into the saber.

Veils and Sultans

In the fourteenth century the Moroccan explorer Ibn Battutah was shocked to find that Turkish women did not wear the veil and were entertained alongside their menfolk.

Felt Making

Felt, which was ideal for keeping out cold winds, was one of the most important fabrics for the medieval Mongols. First, the sheep were washed and sheared, and the fleece was then combed out or carded, and possibly dyed. The wool was spread over a mat of reeds and sprinkled with hot water, then rolled up in the mat and tightly bound. After hours of rolling, the bundle was unpacked. The wool, now densely compacted, was dried and could then be cut and sewn into tunics, jackets and coats, hats, boots, and bags. Felt was also made into rugs and blankets, and was the cloth used for the round tents of the steppes, known as yurts.

This tradition had remained from before their conversion to Islam.

As rulers of the great Ottoman Empire, the Turks indulged in luxury. Sultans of the sixteenth century, such as Suleyman the Magnificent (reigned 1520–1566), were neatly bearded and wore huge turbans on their heads. They had splendid tunics, and robes with elbow-length sleeves. The men and women of the royal court wore cottons, silks, brocades, taffetas, and velvets, mostly produced in the town of Bursa.

Riders of the Steppe

The greatest conquerors of medieval Asia were the Mongols, who lived on the steppe grasslands of Central and Eastern Asia. Their first great leader was Temujin, or Genghis Khan (c. 1162–1227). Mongol armies conquered much of Asia and the Middle East, as well as parts of eastern Europe.

Mongol armies included horseback archers, and light and heavy cavalry. Warriors wore fur or sheepskin caps with long earflaps, or plumed, conical helmets made of hardened leather or metal, with armored flaps to protect the neck. Tunics of wool or silk, trimmed with fur, were worn in conjunction with armor, which was made from small plates of iron or lacquered leather, laced together in strips.

Mongol Dress

The basic item of everyday dress for both men and women was a long,

collarless caftan known as a *del*. The front overlapped to the right and was fastened with five ties. It was generally blue, red, or yellow—a color later reserved for Buddhist priests. Men wore the *del* over loose trousers and high boots. Women wore it longer, over underskirts. Men and unmarried women wore a broad, colored sash around the waist. Both men and women braided their hair, with men also shaving parts of their head. Those descendants of Genghis Khan's warriors who ended up living in luxury in China or Persia wore expensive silks and furs, and eventually adopted local costume.

Mongol archer on horseback.



Southern Asia

Saris and Dhotis

Several items of Hindu dress, none of which were cut and sewn, were in use throughout the ancient, medieval, and modern periods, and continue to be worn today. One example was the sari, worn by Indian women, which took its name from the Sanskrit word for cloth, *chira*. It was made of silk or cotton, often in dazzling colors. This rectangle of cloth, between thirteen and twenty-six feet (4–8 m) in length and about fifty inches (120 cm) wide, was wrapped around the waist and then folded into pleats (known as *plati*), and tucked into the waistband. The rest of the sari (the *pallu*) was draped over the shoulder. The breasts were supported by a band of cloth tied at the back (later, the *choli*, or blouse). A petticoat (*ardhoruka*) was first worn under a sari in the medieval period.

The dhoti was the male equivalent of the sari, being an ankle-length cloth wound around the waist. The *lungi* was a simple cotton loincloth. All these clothes were ideal for the Indian climate and could be tucked up to make them shorter for work in the fields. Veils and turbans in various styles have provided head covering throughout Indian history.

The Delhi Sultanate

Traditional unsewn garments were worn in northern Hindu kingdoms of the early Middle Ages. However, the Muslim rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, which controlled northern India from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, were set apart



In India, saris of cotton or silk were worn together with beautiful necklaces, bracelets, anklets, earrings, and nose rings.

In the 1930s, freedom campaigner Mohandas K. Gandhi adopted the simple spinning wheel, whose design had not changed since the medieval period, as an appropriate symbol of India's history and way of life. Cotton was grown in the Indus valley (now in Pakistan) in prehistoric times. The Indian subcontinent (all the land south of the Himalayan mountain ranges) was the center of world cotton production throughout the Middle Ages. Silks, originally a Chinese invention, were also made in medieval India. Indian skills in dyeing and patterning textiles were legendary.

from most of their subjects by their tailored clothes, trousers, long-sleeved tunics, and skirts. Many of these were made of splendid textiles, worked with gold. Hindu and Muslim weavers worked alongside each other in the royal workshops, and the techniques and styles of the two cultures influenced each other.

Southern Kingdoms

Southern India remained under the rule of Hindu kingdoms, some of which extended their influence across parts of Southeast Asia. Temples supported craftworkers' guilds and workshops. These produced beautiful jewelry and the finest textiles for the royal court and also for the ritual dancers who performed in the temples. Southern Indians still favored fine, draped clothes which accentuated the human figure. Rank was shown by the quality of the cloth rather than by difference of costume. Even kings went bare-chested.

This painting shows the court of Babur (1483–1530), first Moghul emperor of India. Moghul dress was influenced by Mongol, Persian and Indian costume traditions.



Coat of a Thousand Nails

Wars between Hindus and Muslims in the Middle Ages were fought with infantry and archers, heavy and light cavalry, and elephants. The Muslim armies in the north did employ some Hindus, but were largely made up of non-Indians. They wore the mail shirts and scale armor of Central Asia and the Middle East. The native Hindu tradition was to wear light armor, such as a caftan (known here as a *kubcha*) of padded cloth. However, the Indians learned from their enemies, and by the end of the Middle Ages their kaftans included the armored “coat of a thousand nails,” which was patterned with protective studs.

Imperial China



This statue from China's Tang dynasty (581-907) shows a lady of the court wearing an elegant silk gown with long sleeves and an elaborate hairstyle.

Although China suffered setbacks and invasions during the Middle Ages, from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries it enjoyed a period of economic prosperity, flourishing art and literature, and technological advances. Its riches in the 1270s astounded the Venetian traveler Marco Polo. Costly bales of textiles were bought and sold along the Silk Road, a network of trading routes which extended from China to the Middle East.

Chinese Fabrics

Silk production, or sericulture, was China's most famous invention. Silkworms (caterpillars of the silk moth) were placed on trays and fed with mulberry leaves. They produced cocoons, and when these were plunged into hot water, the fine filaments came apart and could be reeled off and twisted together to make silk thread. Chinese silk-making probably reached its zenith during the Song dynasty (907–1276).

Codes of Dress

The teachings of Kongfuzi or Confucius, which were already a thousand years old at the outset of the Middle Ages, emphasized social order, hierarchy, and duty. These concerns were reflected in dress codes. Silk was the textile worn by emperors and empresses, by members of the imperial court, and by government and military officials. Color and patched motifs such as animals or birds indicated rank. Chinese religious traditions emphasized visual harmony,



This picture shows an emperor and empress from China's Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Note the long sleeves of the silk robes.

so symmetry, or balance, was also an important element of fashion design. Ankle-length silk costume was the formal dress for both men and women during most of the medieval period.

The most common form of gown worn by important men was the *pao shen*, a long silk gown generally worn over trousers which were tucked into boots. Women's fashion at the imperial court included a narrow-sleeved everyday gown and a ceremonial gown with enormously wide sleeves.

Changing Fashions

Chinese women's fashions varied over the years. There were long

Little Feet

During the tenth or eleventh centuries, a custom began among families of Chinese dancers and entertainers. At the age of five or six, young girls had their feet tightly bound. This prevented the foot from growing naturally and caused severe deformation. The intention was that when they grew up, their feet would look tiny and that they would trip along daintily as they walked. Later, in the Song dynasty, this cruel practice became a general fashion, which lasted into modern times. A pair of women's embroidered slippers of the thirteenth century, discovered in Fujian province, were just five inches (13 cm) long.



gowns or long skirts worn beneath tunics, sashes and shawls, crowns and headdresses, higher or lower necklines, collars or no collars. The most colorful period for women's fashion was during the prosperous Tang dynasty (618–907), when noblewomen still led fairly active lives.

Farmers and Soldiers

Working people such as farmers, laborers, or even merchants, were forbidden from wearing silk gowns. In the cold north, furs and sheepskins kept people warm. In the warm south, cotton tunics were worn over loose trousers, with sandals made from straw or rushes. Chinese soldiers wore armor of

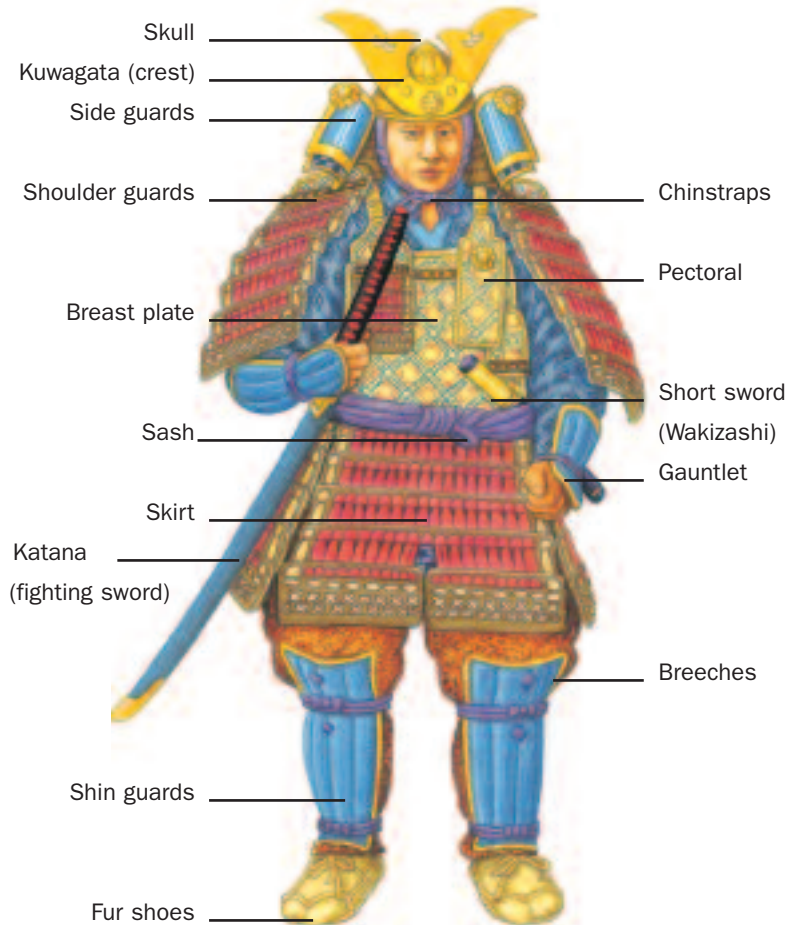
scales, small plates, leather, or—from the twelfth century—bands of iron. A unique type of armor was invented in the Tang dynasty, made from up to fifteen layers of glued paper. It was surprisingly tough.

Non-Chinese Fashions

The Yuan dynasty, founded by Mongol conquerors in 1271, brought Mongolian influence to bear on male and female fashion, such as very wide waistbands. However, the Mongols eventually adopted Chinese clothes. A painting of 1280 shows the dynasty's founder, Kublai Khan, wearing rich Chinese brocades beneath his Mongolian furs.

Korea and Japan

A medieval Japanese samurai dresses for battle in the full *o-yoroi*.



Korean Hanbok

The Korean peninsula, extending from the Chinese mainland, was occupied by three small kingdoms at the start of the Middle Ages: Gogureyo, Silla, and Baekje. Power shifted between the three. A new dynasty, the Goryeo, ruled until the Mongols invaded in the 1270s, after which the Joseon kingdom was founded.

Korea's quite bulky-looking traditional dress (*hanbok*) dates back to the Three Kingdoms period. It originated as a caftan-style garment, worn by both men and women, closed right to left and fastened with a belt. This eventually evolved into a short jacket, the *jeogori*, tied left-over-right (the Chinese way), with a long ribbon. Below this, women wore a long, wraparound skirt, the *chima*, also fastened with ribbons. Men wore baggy trousers beneath the jacket, gathered in at the ankles. A long coat called the *durumagi* might also be worn. In the Joseon kingdom, as in China, colors of dress indicated rank and status.

Feudal Warriors

Medieval Japan developed a feudal system similar to that of Europe. Its feudal lords were called *daimyo*. They wore *eboshi*, black caps of silk stiffened with lacquered paper, over a topknot of hair. Their knights were called *samurai*, and they formed a social elite, following a strict code of honor (*Bushido*). *Samurai* warriors developed elaborate and very fine armor between 858 and 1185. The *o-yoroi* (great armor) combined plate sections with strips of small, lacquered plates laced together with tasseled silk cords, wide shoulder guards, and skirts. It was worn over robes and breeches. The bowl-shaped helmet had a broad, flared neck flap and crest. Fully armed, the mere appearance of the samurai struck fear into their enemies.

Japanese Costume

Eastward from Korea lay the mountainous islands of Japan. Here, craft skills had been practiced since prehistoric times: Japan has the oldest known pottery in the world, and silk and hemp cloths were being produced at an early date. At the start of the Middle Ages, the Japanese nobility wore long, silk costumes, either as two separate garments or as a one-piece gown. Chinese fashions were closely followed. Sumptuary laws issued in 718 even insisted that robes should be fastened in exactly the same way as in China.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, Japan began to grow away from Chinese influence. Robes for men and women of the imperial court, cut to a straight-line pattern and then sewn together, mark the origins of the dress that in modern times has become known to the Western world as the *kimono* (a word which actually just means “clothing”). Robes could be worn in several layers. Colors denoted the status of the wearer and varied with the seasons.

From 1185 emperors lost control to the nobles and wars raged through Japan. Fashions became much simpler and more austere at this time, but luxury and color returned at the end of the medieval period. The modern *kimono* style did not appear until after the Middle Ages.

Wraparound robes were worn by many social classes, in cotton, hemp, or ramie, if not silk. Working men wore tunics over loose trousers and sandals of straw or wooden-soled shoes. Shoes were never worn indoors. Splendid costumes and beautiful masks were worn by actors in a type of drama called Noh, which became popular from the 1300s onward.

In Noh theatre, males played female parts, and wore masks like this one.





Chapter 5: Oceania and the Americas

500–1550

Oceania

There is no record of Europeans reaching Australia before 1606, although it is possible that a Chinese fleet reached its shores in the fifteenth century.

However, the Australian aborigines had populated the continent perhaps 50,000 years previously. During the Middle Ages, the Aborigines formed scattered groups of hunters and gatherers across the land.

The vast expanse of the Pacific was not crossed by Europeans until Ferdinand Magellan's fleet entered that ocean in 1519. However, its countless islands had been colonized

by Southeast Asian peoples such as the Melanesians and the Lapita folk (ancestors of the Polynesians).

Polynesian migrations took place between about 1000 BCE and 1000 CE. By the 1200s the Polynesian islands were ruled by powerful chiefs. The islands and larger landmasses of the Pacific Ocean were not visited by outsiders during the Middle Ages. There are no written accounts of how Australian aborigines or Pacific islanders looked or dressed at this time. However, later traditions and archaeological remains offer some evidence. For example, huge, carved stone figures were raised on Easter Island during the Middle Ages. Some of the stone heads have elongated earlobes. Some have earplugs, red topknots, and what may represent tattooing and loincloths.



The mysterious Easter Island statues give us some clues about the appearance of Polynesian rulers in the Middle Ages.

Australian Hunters

Australia's aborigines were experts at surviving in a harsh, hot environment. They lived by fishing, hunting, and gathering, and also sowed and harvested seeds of food plants where

Polynesian Tattoos

Our word *tattoo* comes from the Tahitian word *tatau*. The practice of tattooing is found across the Polynesian islands and was common during the medieval period. Archaeologists in New Zealand have dated a *uhi* (the chisel or burin used to make the tattoos) to sometime between 1150 and 1260. Tattooing customs varied across the Pacific, but the patterns were always very elaborate and had spiritual and social significance. The Maori tattoo, or *moko*, covered a warrior's whole head (the most sacred part of his body), and sometimes also his thighs, with swirling lines. Maori women might tattoo their lower face, around the mouth.

possible. The aborigines mostly went naked, but in many regions they wore sewn cloaks of kangaroo or opossum skin, pinned at the shoulder. On the island of Tasmania they greased their bodies with animal fat as protection against the cold.

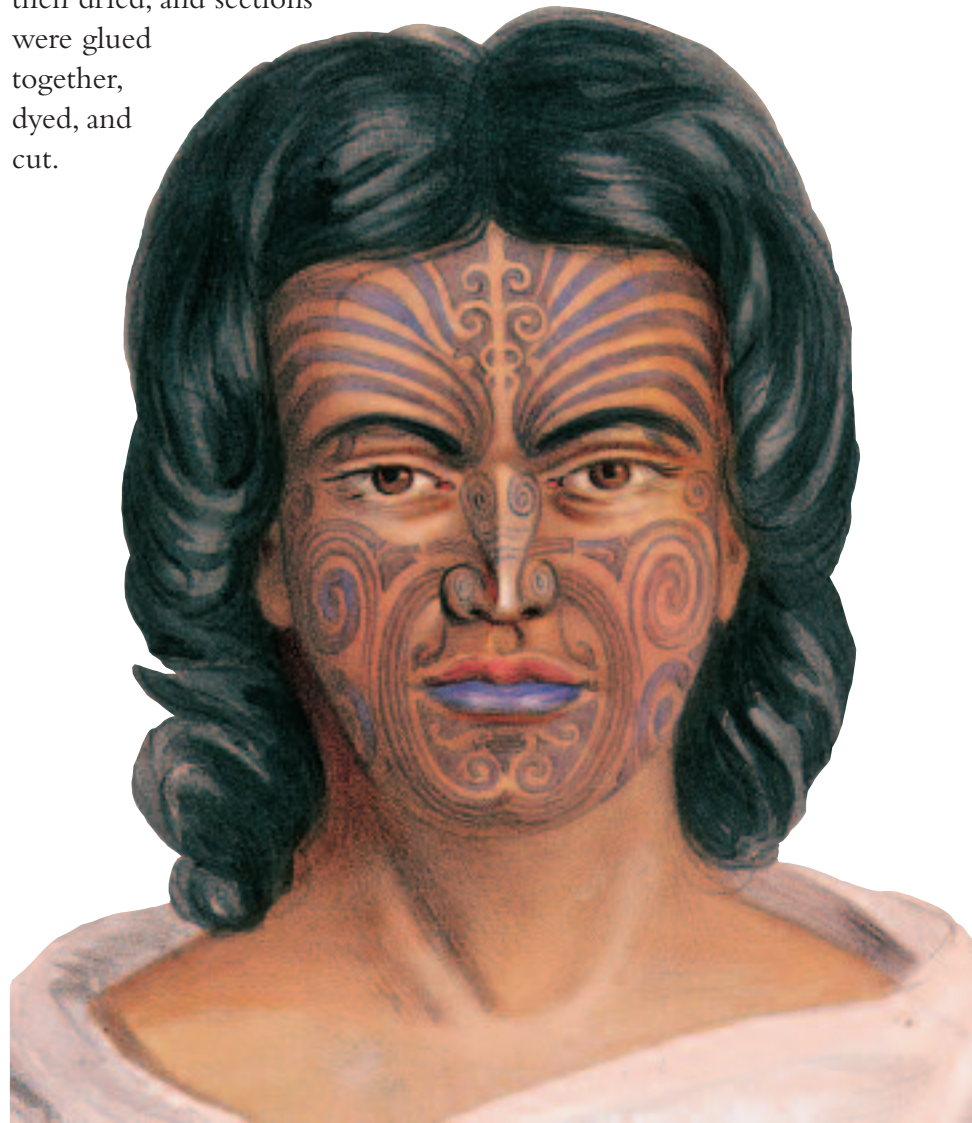
The aborigines wove, knotted, coiled, and dyed fibers such as long pandanus leaves. They made bags, headbands, armbands, pendants, necklaces, bracelets, and pendants, using shells, bones, animal teeth, claws, feathers, and fur. Bodies were decorated with ocher or ash and cut to produce decorative scarring. The geometrical patterns on their bodies reflected their beliefs in ancestral animal spirits and clans, and they made elaborate headdresses for religious ceremonies and dances. In some regions hair was dressed with red ocher; in others it was decorated with seeds. Men were often bearded.

Across the Pacific

The Melanesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians who populated the Pacific islands in the medieval period generally made use of grasses, leaves, and fronds to make kilts or longer

skirts. Shells, bones, and flowers were worn for ornament. A tradition developed of making garments from a barkcloth fabric known as *tapa*. The pithy inner bark of the paper mulberry tree was stripped away, soaked, and beaten until flat. It was then dried, and sections were glued together, dyed, and cut.

Facial tattooing was common amongst the Maoris of medieval New Zealand and other Pacific islanders.





Cloaks have a long tradition in Maori history, worn by chiefs and representing the honor of the family or clan. They were generally woven by older women.

Maori Flax and Feathers

The last of the great Pacific migrations was carried out by the Polynesian ancestors of the Maori people, who probably arrived in

New Zealand by canoe toward the end of the tenth century CE. New Zealand was colder than many other Pacific islands, and the islanders had

Hine-Rehia

Weaving played such an important part in medieval life that it appears time after time in mythology and folklore around the world. In New Zealand, folk tales of the Polynesian Maori people tell how the first settlers on the islands learned how to use local plants for weaving. They tell of Hine-Rehia, a fairy woman, who knew all the secrets of preparing, working, and dyeing the local form of flax. She would only work by night, saying that daylight would destroy her beautiful work. Local women decided to learn the secret for themselves. They used trickery to keep her up during the day and spied on her as she worked. She realized too late, and with a wail was carried away on a cloud. The Maori women now knew how to prepare and plait the flax and make fine cloaks all day long. Hine-Rehia was never seen again, but was sometimes heard wailing in the night, lamenting the loss of her secret.

North America

to adapt to a life in a new environment. One of the most valuable native plant fibers was *harakeke*, or New Zealand flax. Other textile fibers came from a climbing plant called *kiekie*, and many plants produced natural dyes. Twined cords were worn around the waist, supporting a woven or plaited short kilt. Women did not always cover their breasts, and men went into battle naked.

The Maoris wore cloaks made of flax fiber cloth or the skins of dogs. They also developed a technique for decorating the finest cloaks with masses of feathers, most commonly of the kiwi. The feather cloak, or *kahu huruhuru*, was a prized possession, handed down from one generation to the next.

Necklaces of bone and whale tooth were worn, and, later, pendants and long earrings of greenstone and other materials became popular. Carved combs were worn in the warrior's topknot, sometimes with a feather.

The Americas have been peopled since prehistoric times. By the medieval period, great empires had grown up in regions of South and Central America,

while in North America tribal peoples lived by hunting or farming.

The 700s CE saw the rise of Pueblo cultures, with villages built of adobe (sun-dried mud brick). In the later Middle Ages, these villages were built into the sides of cliffs and canyons. These defensive sites were abandoned, probably as a result of drought and warfare, in the fourteenth century. The three main Pueblo cultures are known as Hohokam, Mogollon, and Anasazi.

The southwest of North America has a dry climate, which has preserved fragments of fabrics, feathers, and fibers. Coarse fibers such as yucca were used to make sandals and clothing, sewn with bone needles and thread made of animal sinews. Simple loincloths were worn, or tunics and blankets made from hides and furs. Cotton was cultivated from about the year 1000.

Textiles played an important part in the life of the Anasazi farmers.



Textiles were dyed with plants such as sumach, or minerals such as ocher or iron oxide. They were painted with geometric patterns, or sometimes decorated with embroidery. Jewelry was clearly influenced by Mexican styles and was made of shell, turquoise, or feathers.

Medieval Mississippi

The first towns in North America appeared in the 700s CE in the Middle Mississippi valley and reached their high point in the thirteenth century. In 1200 the town of Cahokia had a population of about ten thousand. The Middle Mississippians were successful farmers, and also hunted with bows and arrows.

Surviving Mississippian artifacts include masks of wood and shell, copper pendants, and gorgets—engraved shell disks worn on the

chest. Carved images show dancers dressed in masks and feathers. Textiles were made by twining methods rather than true weaving, and were then dyed. They were traded over a very wide area, and were made into cloaks, skirts, and bags. The regional climate is humid, so only a few textile fragments have survived. Clothes were also made from hide and furs.

Tattoos and Topknots

The influence of the Mississippians extended into the woodlands of the northeast. Here, the ancestors of the Iroquois peoples learned to clear land and farm, but they were also hunters. Northeastern dress was mostly of buckskin or furs. A short cloth was worn by men to cover the loins, and a fringed skirt by women. The bare upper parts of the body were often tattooed and adorned with necklaces,

Native Americans of the east coast wore few clothes and often tattooed or painted their bodies and shaved their heads.



Central America

armbands, or porcupine quills. Men's heads were mostly shaven, leaving a topknot or crest. Faces might be painted.

Red Cedar and Dog Wool

The Pacific coast peoples of the northwest lived by fishing, and hunting whales and seals. Their chief source of fiber was the red cedar tree. Long strips of the soft bark were cut each summer. These could be woven on upright looms and made into blankets or skirts. Another source of fiber was the wool from their fluffy dogs. Cedar bark was also made into conical hats, to keep off rain or sea spray.

Arctic Survival

Waves of settlers from Siberia, such as the Aleuts and the Inuit, had peopled Arctic America in prehistoric times. Migration and settlement continued through the medieval period, eastward to Greenland. Clothes were made from the hides of caribou, musk ox, polar bear, or arctic hare or fox, and from bird skins and feathers. Hides were softened by chewing or beating and sewn with gut to make tailored, close-fitting layers. These included breeches for both men and women, shirts, hoods, gloves, and boots to protect against wind chill and frostbite.

Civilized cultures had populated Central America long before the Middle Ages. Great cities flourished during the medieval period, such as Teotihuacán, near Lake Texcoco; the Mayan city of Chichén Itzá; and the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán.

Maguey and Cotton

Few medieval fabrics have survived in the tropical climate of the region, but clothing styles and textile processes are revealed in stone carvings and pottery, in Mayan wall paintings, and in Aztec illustrated sheets called codices. Native dress was also described by the conquering Spanish.

This codex sheet lists tribute goods paid to the Aztec rulers by 26 towns in their empire. Goods provided include civilian clothes (top), battledress and war shields (center).



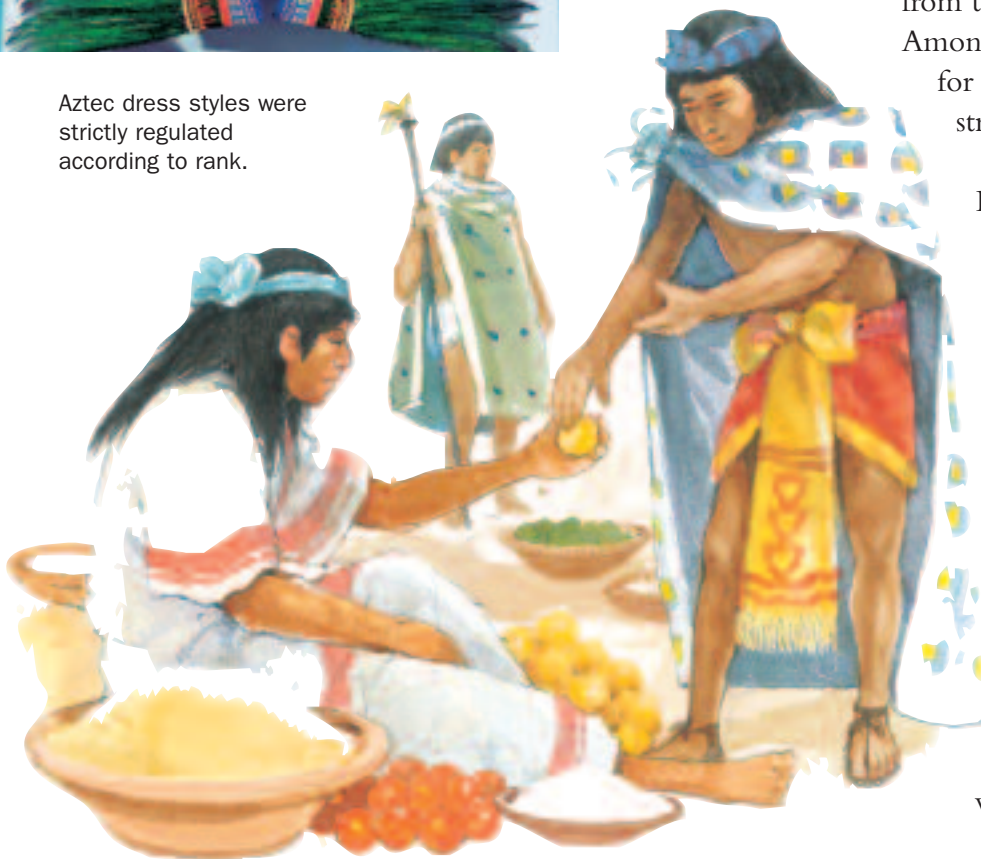
Feather Work

Some of the most skillful craftworkers were the Aztec *amanteca*, or feather-workers. They were part of a longstanding tradition in the region. Brilliantly colored feathers from wild or specially bred tropical birds were tied into fabric as it was woven. Feather work was used for headdresses, ceremonial shields, and the splendid cloaks worn only by royalty and the nobility. A headdress was sent from the Aztec ruler Montezuma II (reigned 1502–1520) to the king of Spain. It was made of gold, turquoise, and the shimmering green feathers of the sacred quetzal bird.



Aztec quetzal feather headdress, early sixteenth century

Aztec dress styles were strictly regulated according to rank.



Textiles, garments, jewelry, and feathers often meant much more than mere items of clothing or adornment. A marriage ceremony was marked by the symbolic knotting together of the clothes worn by bride and groom. Clothes and textiles were also sent by subject peoples as tribute—a kind of tax—to the Aztec emperors.

Spinning was done with a drop spindle, and weaving on backstrap looms. Cactus spines were used as needles for sewing. The most common fibers in the region came from tough desert plants such as maguey agave. The fibers were coarse, but could produce a surprisingly flexible cloth, worn by most ordinary people. Cool, smooth cotton was cultivated in warm, lowland areas from the start of the Middle Ages. Amongst the Aztecs, it was reserved for nobles in accordance with strict sumptuary laws.

Dyes were made from minerals, plants, and animals. Purple was obtained from shellfish, and crimson from cochineal insects, collected from cultivated groves of nopal cactus. Textiles were patterned with geometric designs, flowers, or animals, or decorated with embroidery.

Clothes and Jewelry

Clothes worn in the region were not close-fitting. Loose

garments were favored, such as tunics, loincloths, skirts, and women's blouses (*huipils*). Cloaks were knotted around the neck. The design of the clothes varied little, but the quality of the cloth indicated social status.

However, even nobles had to wear simple cloaks when in the company of the emperor. Mayan paintings show lords dressed in jaguar skins, plumes, and ritual headdresses.

Jewelry included ear plugs, lip plugs, earrings, and necklaces. Many of the finest jewelers were Mixtecs, and they worked in shell, amber, obsidian, jade, turquoise, and gold. An Aztec emperor wore armbands, anklets, and rattles of gold on his feet. To the Aztecs, gold and silver were sacred metals, associated with worship of the Sun and Moon and with the emperor and empress. Commoners were not allowed to wear precious metals or gems.

Men wore their hair short, and boys wore a long tuft of hair at the back. Unmarried women wore their hair long, but married women braided their hair around the head, so that two bound "horns" stuck out on each side. A young woman might paint her face yellow or use clay stamps to pattern her skin with dyes.

Warriors and Priests

Warriors wore elaborate costumes. The Aztec army had two elite units, the Jaguars and the Eagles, whose uniforms were designed to look like these creatures. Helmets were made of bone or wood and armor was of



padded cotton. The Aztec priests, who performed human sacrifices, painted their faces and bodies black and never washed their hair.

This statue from Tula shows the battledress of a Toltec warrior. The Toltecs were at the height of their power between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

South America

At the start of the Middle Ages, the Andes mountains and Pacific coast of South America were home to various cultures. In 500 CE the city of Tiwanaku, near Lake Titicaca, may have had a population of up to 100,000 people. The city-state of Wari reached the height of its powers in about 700 CE, at a time when the ancient coastal civilizations of Moche in the north, and Nazca in the arid south, were coming to an end. The Chimú civilization was growing up in the city of Chan Chan and was a major power by 900 CE.

The feather headdress and ear plugs signified high rank amongst the Chancay people of the central Peruvian coast in the late medieval period.



The last of the great Andean civilizations was Tawantinsuyu, the empire of the Incas. Their capital, Cuzco, in modern Peru, was founded in about 1100. The Incas built up their empire until it extended 2,230 miles (3,600 km) north to south, and about 200 miles (320 km) inland. It was invaded by Spanish troops in the 1530s.

Cotton and Camelids

Medieval South America had a very ancient textile tradition. Cotton was widely grown and as a cool fiber it was popular in the hot, coastal regions. Camelid wool was also prized. The llama had a coarse coat, but the alpaca and wild vicuña produced yarn of the highest quality. Plants and cochineal insects provided dyes.

Drop spindles were used, as they still are in the Andes. The upright loom was traditional in some regions, and was best for making broad strips of cloth, but the backstrap loom was the most widespread. Needles were of bone, and embroidery was common. Patterns included animals, flowers, and geometric motifs. The finest textiles—worn by rulers, nobles, or priests—might include beautiful feathers, gold work, sequins, or beads.

Women of all social classes learned to weave, and there were male weavers, too. In the Inca empire, textiles were collected as part of a tax that all households had to pay, and were stored in government warehouses.

Inca Dress

Inca men wore a simple, belted loincloth beneath a knee-length poncho-style tunic, often made of alpaca wool. A cloak would be worn during cold weather. Women wore a rectangular alpaca wrap, tied by a sash at the waist, and a shawl. The *tupu*, a long decorative pin in copper, silver, or gold was used to fasten wraps, shawls, and cloaks. Sandals were made of leather or grasses.

There were many regional variants of headgear, from headbands and woolen caps to feathered headdresses. Headdresses indicated rank in the Inca army. The crown of the Inca emperor was the *llauta*, a multicolored braid with tassels and gold pendants.

Gold and Silver

The Moche and Chimú peoples produced beautiful gold jewelry, and the Andean peoples loved to wear necklaces, pendants, nostril rings, and disks. Jewelry was also made from shell, from local turquoise or imported jet, and lapis lazuli. Only nobles were allowed to wear precious metals. Large gold ear plugs were an emblem of noble rank.



This Chancay textile is elaborately decorated with zigzag patterns and beads.

Beyond the Andes

To the east of the Andes were the vast rainforests around the Orinoco and Amazon rivers. Here, the peoples went naked or wore leaves and fibers, or skins. They painted their bodies with tribal markings. Little is known of dress in the far south of the continent at this time, but the native Fuegians probably appeared much as their descendants did, with matted hair and faces painted in red, black, and white. They wore cloaks of another wild camelid, the guanaco, and rubbed animal grease into their bodies as protection against the cold.



Chapter 1: The Incas

Cloth and Culture in the Andes

Finely woven textiles have been central to the social, political, and economic lives of the people inhabiting the Andes mountains of South America for more than five thousand years. The Inca Empire rose to power there around 1200 CE, and at its height in the fifteenth century it ruled over a region that stretched from modern Colombia to Chile, and from the Pacific Ocean to the Amazonian rainforest. Cuzco, the central city of Inca civilization, was rich, with great buildings decorated with sheets of gold, and noblemen wearing headdresses encrusted with jewels and topped with exotic feathers.

Throughout the Inca Empire, weavings were the most important trading commodity and the most highly prized possessions. Gifts of specially woven cloth strengthened social and political ties between leaders. The Incas even worshiped a deity of textiles, Aksu Mama, to whom they made sacrifices each year.

Fibers, Dyes, and Looms

The Incas drew upon thousands of years of weaving tradition and knowledge. Brown and white cotton was cultivated in the Andes as early as 3800 BCE. Portable backstrap looms were used from 2500 BCE onwards. Camelid fibers were introduced into cloth in the ninth century BCE. In Inca society, clothes made from alpaca hair were the most common. Llama hair produced the roughest wool, and

the silky hair of the wild vicuña was highly prized.

To color these yarns, the Incas used leaves, fruits, berries, lichen, tree bark, and minerals to make vivid dyes that did not fade or bleed. The cochineal insect was crushed to produce beautiful red, purple, and black dyes.

Weavers used backstrap looms to create delicate belts and headbands. Horizontal and vertical looms were used to produce larger textiles and tapestries.

Symbolism

The Incas did not have a system of written language. Instead they used symbols to convey complex information. They wove geometric patterns into their clothing to represent calendars, religious festivals,



Inca women wove cloth on backstrap looms, as shown in this sixteenth-century Peruvian illustration.

magical beliefs, and regional loyalties. For example, a diamond pattern represented Inti, the sun god. A double-headed snake pattern honored the god Amaru. The most luxurious garments were decorated with *tocapus*, small figures repeated within a larger geometric pattern. Even ordinary garments had symbolic value: farmers carried their produce in bags made of striped cloth that indicated through its patterns what was held inside.

Status and Society

Weaving was central to the economy of the Inca Empire. All people were required to pay tax to the rulers in the form of labor, called *mit'a*, often by weaving cloth. Specialist male weavers called *cumbicamayos* lived only to embroider *cumbi*, fine cloths of alpaca and vicuña fibers, which were used as diplomatic gifts by the nobility. The finest fabrics included brocades and gauzes decorated with precious metals or rare seashells. Women of all ranks spun yarns, wove cloth, and created accessories such as ponchos, belts, coca bags, and shoulder cloths. Most cloth was produced for the Inca rulers, who stored it in government warehouses

until it was used as payment for soldiers or administrative officials, who turned it into clothing.



This Inca cloth, with its many colors and geometric patterns, was worn as a symbol of high social status.

Mummy Bundles

Important Incas were buried with fine, embroidered cloths. These sacred fabrics were created specifically for this purpose and were intended to accompany the wearer into the next world. Some nobles were mummified and buried in mummy bundles: mummies wrapped in layers of textiles, and topped with false heads bearing masks or wigs. These bundles would contain one large black cloth and as many other fine, colored textiles as wealth would allow.

Inca Clothing

Throughout the Inca Empire, people at all levels of society wore the same style of garments, but the cloth from which these garments were made revealed the wearers' wealth and origins. In the warm coastal lowlands, the Incas preferred cotton clothing, which kept their bodies cool.

Inhabitants of the colder mountain regions wore clothes made of alpaca or llama wool. On their feet the Incas wore grass shoes or llama leather sandals bound with brightly colored wool fastenings.

This Inca nobleman wears an expensive embroidered tunic, a large headdress, and gold earrings.



The Inca government supplied some clothing to its subjects: couples were given new garments from the official warehouses when they married, and older people without families received enough clothing to survive.

Tunics and Tocapus

Inca men wore a loincloth, a long strip of cloth that went through the legs and wrapped around the waist to secure like a belt. In hot weather they wore this alone. On top, men wore a sleeveless, knee-length tunic made from one piece of cloth, with a slit cut through the middle to make space for the head. The waistlines of Inca tunics were often decorated with tocapus, which revealed information about the wearer, such as his wealth, birthplace, or status. Men also wore embroidered sashes around the waist. In cold weather and on formal occasions, men wore a loose cloak over a tunic, tying its two corners in front, at the neck. Instead of using pockets, men carried their tools, amulets, and coca leaves in small bags.

Warriors wore headdresses that were appropriate for their rank. Ordinary Inca helmets were round, made from wood or cane, and decorated with small braids and crests. Officers wore elaborate, feathered headdresses with ornamental badges.

Sashes and Shawls

Women wore a long, sleeveless dress that reached from the neck to the ankles and was open at the sides to ease walking. The most valuable



The Incas prized cloth decorated with repeated geometric patterns called *tocapus*.

dressess had delicate, colorful tocapus woven into the cloth around the waist. Women could also wear a sash decorated with tocapus around the waist to embellish a dress. Around the shoulders, women wore a square, draped shawl, which they fastened across the breast with a shawl pin called a *tupu* (see panel). Peasant women used these shawls to carry produce or small children.

Headbands

Ordinary Inca men wore their hair long in the back and trimmed into a neat fringe at the front. Around the

head they wore a narrow, woven headband. The Incas had many different types of headbands, woolen caps, and feathered headdresses, according to their regions and status. Women wore their hair long and parted down the middle, and often twisted it into fine plaits. They cut it only at funerals. Women wore a headband similar to the men's, and noblewomen also wore a large piece of folded cloth over this.

Archeologists have found bronze mirrors at Inca sites, and also bronze tweezers, which they believe were used to remove unwanted facial hair.

Shawl Pins

Inca women used long, straight metal pins called *tupus* to fasten all of their outer garments. Tupus were made from bronze, copper, silver, or gold. One end of a tupu was sharp and the other was decorative. The decorative end could be shaped like an animal or a human figure. Most often, it took the shape of a half-moon, and was made of metal so thin and sharp that it could be used as a knife.



Manco Capac, the first Inca ruler, at the sun festival that he initiated.

Inca Aristocracy



The first Inca ruler Manco Capac is portrayed wearing enormous, spiralling, gold earrings and a richly colored robe.

Ear Plugs

Wearing enormous plugs in the lower part of the ear, close to the lobe, was a sign of great status among Inca noblemen. Young noble boys received their first ear piercings and ear plugs during the annual Splendid Festival, when they were first recognized as adults. The materials, colors, and size of a man's ear plugs indicated his status. These ear plugs were therefore made as large as possible, and were composed of precious metals and rare stones. Through wearing them, noblemen developed stretched ears. The Spanish conquistadors called the Inca nobility *orejones*, or "big ears." Within Inca society, however, these large ears were considered prestigious.

The Inca rulers enjoyed the softest garments covered in *tocapus*, the most precious jewelry, and the most extravagantly plumed headdresses. Entitlement to wear embellishments like feathers, rare shells, turquoise, gold, and silver was reserved exclusively for royalty, the nobility, and the highest-ranking military officers. People from all over the Inca Empire sent tributes of rare clothing and jewelry to the emperor, and certain fabrics, feathers, and colors were claimed for his use alone. Royal and noble Inca people groomed themselves well, often bathing in private bathtubs decorated with colorful cut stones.

The Sapa Inca

The word *Inca* applies to the Inca people, and also to their emperor. The Sapa Inca, as he was known, wore a new outfit every day. He very rarely wore any garment more than once. Instead, after he wore a garment, it was stored for one year and then burned in a special ceremony. The Sapa Inca wore not only vicuña hair tunics decorated with rare shells, beads, feathers, and gold threads, but also clothes made from the rarest of fibers, such as bat hairs. Many of his clothes were woven in temples by the Virgins of the Sun, secluded women chosen for this purpose at the age of eight.

The emperor wore a royal, ceremonial headdress called a *llautu*. It was a turban of many colored folds that wrapped around his head, with a crimson-tasselled, vicuña-wool fringe

held over his forehead by a textile band, topped with two feathers from the rare coraquenque bird. Other royal family members wore textile headbands with royal fringes of gold and woolen tassels, but the crimson color was reserved for the Sapa Inca only.

Rare Plumes

The Inca royalty and nobility were very fond of plumed headdresses, which demonstrated to others their privileged status at a glance. Prized feathers included those of falcons, eagles, hummingbirds, herons, and egrets. The conquered tribes of the Amazon sent the Sapa Inca brilliant macaw feathers as homage, which he wore in ceremonial headdresses and fans. The feathers of the coraquenque bird were used to make only the emperor's regal headdress, and anyone caught hurting or stealing a coraquenque was immediately put to death.

Gold as the Sun

In the Inca world, gold represented the sun, and therefore the emperor. Silver symbolized the moon, and the emperor's queen. Gold and silver were used to create elaborate jewelry for the nobility. Noblemen wore intricate bracelets, disks, necklaces, pendants, and nostril rings. Women wore only necklaces and shawl pins as jewelry. The most precious stone to the Incas was blue-green turquoise, but blue lapis lazuli and black jet were also highly prized. Many precious stones and metals came from the northern edge of the Inca Empire, in modern-day Columbia.



The Incas discovered the techniques needed to work gold into decorative forms such as this necklace and brooch in the form of a llama.



Chapter 2: The Maya

Mayan Civilization

The Mayan civilization started to develop between 2000 and 1000 BCE in the Yucatán peninsula and the land covered by present-day Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize. The Maya were skilled farmers, weavers, potters, and traders, and they developed sophisticated astronomical charts, calendars, and hieroglyphic writing.

Their civilization grew in power between 250 and 600 CE, and by the early seventh century they had built dozens of city-states containing great pyramids and highly decorated stone architecture. Sometime between 650 and 900, however, the Mayan civilization went into decline. By the tenth century the Maya had largely abandoned their greatest city-states, such as Chichen Itza. Their people and culture persisted, however, in cities along the coastline. Through the sixteenth century, the Maya continued to exert a strong cultural influence on other Mesoamerican peoples through trade.



This Mayan woman wears a *huipil*, or draped blouse, over her long skirt.

The ancient zigzag symbols in this modern Mayan weaving represent lightning bolts.



Corn-Shaped Heads

The perfect Mayan head had an elongated profile that started with the end of the nose and sloped at a sharp angle up the forehead and toward the crown. Ideally, the head was shaped like an ear of corn, the Mayan staple crop. The corn god himself was represented with an elongated head. To achieve this look, they would strap two boards to the heads of newborn babies. To further enhance their profiles as adults, the Maya would use clay to shape their noses so that they appeared sleek and straight.



This stucco head of a Mayan warrior bears the ideal Mayan nose and forehead.

Text in Textiles

Like the Incas, the Maya farmed both white and light brown cotton, which they dyed and wove into colorful textiles using backstrap looms. They also used istle, fibers from the agave plant, to make rough cloth. Like other Central and South American peoples, they wove symbolism with colorful threads into their textiles, which could be read like texts and which varied according to region, family group, and tradition. Popular symbols in Mayan textiles included: two-headed animals, such as the two-headed eagle from mythology; zigzags, which represented the god of lightning; and the central mythological symbol called Yaxché, the Tree of Life.

Draped Cloth

Mayan men wore a loincloth, or *maxtatl*, a long tunic called a *xicolli*, and a cape, or *pati*. On their heads they wore a rectangular cloth folded in half diagonally and tied at the nape of the neck, known as a *tzute*. They could also wear the *tzute* draped decoratively over the shoulders, or as

a cape during festivals. Mayan women wore a skirt with a long blouse called a *huipil* that hung down past the waist. The *huipil* was made from a rectangular length of cloth sewn up the sides with wide openings for the arms, and an opening in the center for the neck. Women also wore *tzutes* as protection from the sun, and as ornamental capes for festivals and ceremonial rituals.

Beauty Ideals

The Maya were especially interested in the human body, and they thought that certain physical traits, such as high cheekbones, represented the ideal in human beauty. The Maya also found slightly crossed eyes attractive. To give their children crossed eyes, they dangled small balls of resin between their eyes for long periods of time. The Maya decorated their teeth by filing them and then inlaying them with jade, obsidian, and other precious stones. For protection against insects and the cold, they smeared a dark clay liquid over their limbs. They also used black clay to dye their hair, and wore tattoos.

Mayan Costumes



Mayan aristocrats wearing large jewelry and elaborate headdresses. Their servant carries a fan to keep them cool.



This painted vessel shows a ball player wearing thick padding to protect his body during the game.

The Maya lived according to a complex religious calendar that included many lavish seasonal rituals. During these ceremonies, the Mayan elite wore elaborate costumes that displayed their wealth and reflected their social status in the civilization's strict hierarchy. A fantastical headdress could symbolically portray the wearer's royal heritage, military achievements, or central role within a religious rite. Maya of all social classes dressed up to take part in these seasonal ceremonies. They witnessed ritual human sacrifices and watched the struggle between life and death played out through symbolic ball games.

Heads of Society

The Mayan aristocracy wore long robes and cloaks decorated with richly woven patterns and colorful knots, fringe, and feathers from sacred quetzals and other rare birds. Royal men wore clothing and sandals made

The Ball Game

Many Mesoamerican societies played a ball game that held great significance, not just as a sport but as a ritualistic way of settling disputes. The Maya inherited this game from their predecessors the Olmecs, and they considered it so important that they built ball courts in all but the smallest towns. Players were divided into two teams, and the game involved hitting a large, heavy rubber ball across the court and into high hoops. To play, they wore a loincloth with a thick padded belt to protect the waist and hips. They also wore padding on their forearms and knees, at the sides of the body, to protect themselves from injury when diving to the ground. Players also wore large headdresses and decorative chest ornaments. To the Maya, the game represented the struggle between the forces of life and death, and the losers were often decapitated.

from jaguar pelts. Royal women wore long dresses with woven belts that displayed noble insignia. Royal Maya of both sexes wore feathered headdresses in extravagant shapes, such as a pagoda, a shell, or a bunch of fruit. The larger the headdress, the greater the status of the wearer. Rich men also wore lots of jewelry, including pectorals and leg and arm bands of jade, gold, and rare sea shells. Men pierced their ears, noses, and lips to hold large rings and studs. The richest aristocrats had servants who carried large feathered fans to keep them cool.

Mayan Warriors

Warriors belonged to the elite of Mayan society, and the highest-ranking warriors sometimes wore jaguar pelts like royalty. Going into battle, a Mayan warrior wore quilted cotton body armor, a square chest ornament, and a battle headdress intended to frighten his opponents. He carried a sharp stone spear, mace, ax, or arrows, and a wooden shield decorated with tassels. The Maya often went to war with the objective of finding victims for sacrificial rituals. During these rituals, warrior chiefs wore tunics decorated with symbols relating to the occasion, and elaborate pectoral jewelry depicting animals and humans.

Half Humans, Half Animals

The Maya held many ceremonies that involved human sacrifice, as a payment to the gods in return for favors such as rain, a good harvest, or

victory over enemies in battle. Many of the Mayan gods were depicted as half human and half animal. When the Mayan royals dressed for these sacred rituals, they often wore hybrid costumes and headdresses representing bird-men, feline men, reptilian men, and other monstrous creatures. Other Maya would be chosen to represent particular gods by dressing in costumes representing them during the festivals.

The enormous headdress worn by the King of Copan in this statue indicates his royal status.





Chapter 3: The Aztecs

Rulers of Mexico

In the thirteenth century, groups of hunter-gatherers known as the Mexica took over the cities of the great Toltec civilization in the Valley of Mexico. There they settled, combining their own cultural traditions with those of the Toltecs, and creating the early Aztec civilization. They founded the city of Tenochtitlán, modern Mexico City, on a lake island in 1325. Tenochtitlán became the seat of the emperor and the heart of the Aztec Empire.

This twentieth-century mural painting by Diego Rivera shows ancient Aztecs in typical clothes at the great market of Tenochtitlán.



Over the course of the next hundred years, the Aztecs gained complete power over the region and ruled over lands as far as the border of present-day Guatemala. The Aztec Empire was destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors in the early sixteenth century.

Aztec Civilization

At the height of their civilization, the Aztecs developed advanced art, literature, pictorial writing, music, and scientific knowledge. They lived within a strictly hierarchical society, with an emperor at the top, then royalty, nobility, priests, and warriors. Below them were craftsmen, farmers, and laborers, with slaves at the bottom. The right to wear certain precious ornaments and fine clothing was reserved by law for royalty and the nobility. The penalty for dressing better than your station could be death.

The Aztecs worshiped many gods. Some Aztec gods had been known in Mexico for centuries, and others were adopted from the religions of tribes the Aztecs had conquered. Agriculture was very important to them, and they kept carved stone calendars to plan the seasonal rituals that they hoped would bring them good harvests. Many of their religious rites involved human sacrifice, which they believed kept nature in balance.

Conquest and Culture

Aztec warriors aimed to capture outlying towns and to force the

Montezuma's Wardrobe

Montezuma came to power in 1503 and was the last ruler of the Aztec Empire before the Spanish came to Mexico in 1519. Like previous emperors, he had a godlike status and was considered too important for his feet to touch the earth. So the Aztecs spread cloaks on the ground wherever he walked. Montezuma owned many fantastic and opulent cloaks, including one made from white duck feathers with a wolf's head pattern; and another one lavishly covered with rare quetzal feathers. Montezuma cleaned himself frequently in steam baths, as it was important that he and his clothing remained spotlessly clean. Turquoise was considered a royal stone, and Montezuma's imperial diadem was encrusted with turquoise.

As the emperor, he was the only Aztec allowed to wear a turquoise nose ornament.



The coronation of the Aztec emperor Montezuma II.

conquered people to pay tribute to the empire. As the Aztecs conquered neighboring tribes, they absorbed their cultures into their own civilization. The conquered tribes paid the Aztec rulers with gold, precious stones, rare feathers, cotton, and elaborate costumes in return for their spared lives. Aztec merchants traveled far to spy on foreign tribes and report back to Tenochtitlán with news of their wealth, often perceived through fine clothing and jewelry. If a foreign tribe refused to trade goods with the Aztecs, war and often conquest followed.

Aztec Dress

This scene from Diego Rivera's mural depicts ordinary Aztecs working in Tenochtitlán at the height of the Aztec Empire.



Living in the hot, dry central plains of Mexico, the Aztecs wore loose, flowing clothing made of fabric that breathed and kept them cool. Richer

members of society wore cotton imported from the warm coastal regions, while the poor wore local maguey cactus fiber cloth. The Aztecs loved finery, and they decorated themselves and their clothing with animal and floral patterns, fur, feathers, fringe, precious stones, and seashells, especially during festivals.

Grass Sandals

Ordinary Aztecs went barefoot over the hot, dry ground. Soldiers and wealthy people, however, wore sandals made from leather or vegetable fibers such as corn husks, grass, or yucca. More expensive sandals were decorated with black, brown, red, or yellow designs woven through with dyed fibers. Leather or fiber straps held the sandals in place between the big and first toes. The most complicated sandals had long leather straps that wrapped around the leg from the ankle to the knee.

Materials and Dyes

Unlike the Incas, the Aztecs did not farm camelids for wool. In their hot climate they preferred to farm soft cotton along the Pacific coast, and the common maguey cacti, which produced a rough clothlike linen.

Women spun the yarn, wove it into cloth on backstrap looms, and embroidered it with cactus needles.

The Aztecs loved colorful clothing and used many different dyes. The mora tree produced yellowish-green dye, and acacia leaves made blue dye. Molluscs from the Pacific coast yielded purple dye. The deep, crimson dye produced from the crushed bodies of cochineal insects was highly prized. The Aztecs farmed cochineal insects in their natural habitat, prickly pear cacti. Aztec women used colorful yarns to weave designs representing butterflies, snakes, flowers, conch shells, and geometric shapes into the finest cloth for the nobility.

Men's Clothing

The loincloth was the basic item of clothing for all Aztec men. A loincloth was a long strip of fabric that passed between the legs, wrapped around the waist, and then knotted so that the ends hung down a short length in front and behind. Poor men often wore loincloths made of white maguey fiber cloth. Noblemen wore soft cotton loincloths embroidered with patterns that showed their status.

Over their loincloth, richer men wore a rectangular cloak tied into a knot on the right shoulder. The nobility wore colorful cloaks woven with intricate patterns and trimmed with fur, shells, feathers, or precious stones. The richest men wore several of these fine cloaks at the same time.

As Aztec clothing had no pockets, men wore small pouches over their shoulders to carry tools and coca leaves to chew.

Women's Clothing

The basic garment for an Aztec woman was an ankle-length skirt held in place at the waist by an embroidered belt. Ordinary skirts were made from plain, white cloth, but rich women wore skirts embroidered with designs of fishes, birds, leaves, and flowers. Over her skirt, a noblewoman wore a loose, straight shirt sewn up at the sides and decorated along the neck and the lower border.

To make themselves more attractive, Aztec women often colored their faces with ocher powder and dyed their hair with indigo to make it glossy and black. Young women wore their hair straight and long, while married women looped their hair up into two tufts at the sides that looked like horns.

This codex drawing shows an Aztec man dressed in a rectangular cloak and an Aztec woman dressed in a long skirt with a loose shirt.



Jewelry and Decoration

Aztec men and women loved to show off by dressing up in jewelry, carrying fans, and wearing headdresses. They prized jade and turquoise above all other stones, and used gold, silver, and rare shells to make necklaces, pendants, bracelets, rings, brooches, and chest ornaments. Aztec men pierced their ears, noses, and lips to hold large stone and metal jewelry. Feathers gathered from the distant tropical regions of the Aztec Empire decorated elaborate royal headdresses, fans, and shields. Aztec

metal and feather craftsmen belonged to important guilds and lived in exclusive communities under the perceived protection of their own deities.

Precious Stones and Metals

The Aztecs valued turquoise and jade from western Mexico more highly than any other material including gold. Only the Aztec emperor was allowed to wear a nose ornament made from turquoise. Jade and turquoise pieces were placed in mosaic patterns on gold crowns, helmets, ear pieces, and bracelets. Aztec jewelers also used amber, emeralds, obsidian, rock crystal, amethysts, and rare shells to create amulets worn for good luck.

Aztec smiths worked with gold from the Pacific coast, silver from Oaxaca, and copper, which they mixed with gold to create a cheaper alloy called *tumbaga*. Goldsmiths devised a clever casting technique in which wax held the gold's shape during the casting process, then melted away to leave hollow gold pieces, which could be shaped like shells, bells, frogs, or other rounded forms from nature.

Body Piercing

An Aztec nobleman experienced his first body piercing during childhood, when his ears were fitted with tiny studs. Gradually these studs were replaced with larger ear ornaments until his ears had been stretched wide enough to hold thick rods that displayed large, heavy disks. Men also



The Mixtecs, who lived at the southern edge of the Aztec Empire, were highly skilled in creating intricate gold artworks like this pendant showing the god Xipe.

pierced their noses at the nostrils to hold nose studs, and through the bridge to hold rods of gold or precious stones. Through one or two pierced holes in their lower lips, men wore labrets—pieces of gold, stone, or shell shaped like eagles, serpents, and other animals.



This shield, made of gold and feathers, was owned by the Aztec emperor Montezuma II. The central figure might be a coyote or a mythical creature.

Featherwork

The colourful, exotic birds that lived in the remote, tropical regions of the Aztec Empire yielded feathers that the nobility wore in their clothing and accessories. The Aztecs prized eagle, parrot, and hummingbird feathers, and considered the bright green feathers of the quetzal bird sacred. Quetzal feathers represented wisdom and fertility, and were added to the emperor's headdresses. Feather merchants brought rare feathers to Tenochtitlán, where the

Honored Jade

Jade was so highly prized by the Aztecs that the Aztec word for jade, *chalchihuitl*, referred to the stone and also to anything precious. To the Aztecs, jade represented water, a symbol of life and purity, and they believed that it held medicinal powers. They carved jade to create necklaces, bracelets, and ceremonial masks. When a rich person died, mourners placed jade beads in his or her mouth to symbolize eternal life after death. When the Aztec emperor Montezuma met Hernan Cortes, he gave him three jade beads that were worth more than 100 pounds of gold to the Aztecs.



featherworkers made fans, shields, armbands, sashes and tassels for the royal family and aristocracy. The featherworkers also created stylish feathered tunics and cloaks, and knotted quills onto cloth backings to create spectacular headdresses for the nobility and priests.

Wealthy Aztec men wore pectoral ornaments such as this one, made from gold and turquoise around 800–1500 CE.

Aztec Warriors

The last Aztec emperor Cuauhtemoc wearing a hairstyle to reflect his status.



Soldiers in the Aztec Empire did not wear standardized uniforms. Each warrior outfitted himself in items of clothing and ornaments that not only protected his body but also displayed

his officially acknowledged rank and military achievements. A successful warrior earned the right to wear particular styles of helmets, insignia, patterned cloth, lip and ear ornaments, and even hairstyles. A warrior's military rank and record for capturing prisoners was therefore immediately recognizable on the battlefield and at special ceremonies. If a warrior dressed in clothing of a higher rank than he was entitled, he could be put to death. Aztec warriors were not paid in money, but those who distinguished themselves in battle received gifts of clothing and jewelry from the aristocracy.

Knightly Orders

When an Aztec warrior had captured more than four prisoners, he could join one of the highest-ranking orders of knights. These were the Eagles, the Jaguars, and the Arrows. Knights wore costumes that were intended to give them the appearance, strength, and abilities of wild animals. An Eagle Knight wore a helmet shaped like an eagle's head with an open beak, through which his face appeared. A Jaguar Knight wore a suit of jaguar or ocelot skins that fitted tightly over his torso, legs, and arms. The fierce head of the animal covered his own head, and his face showed through the sharp teeth.

Lower Ranks

Captains of the lower ranks sported wood or leather helmets carved into menacing shapes. They decorated their helmets and clothing with heraldic badges. Each regiment had

Warrior Hairstyles

The hair of an Aztec warrior conveyed his status and accomplishments in battle at one glance. A new recruit to the military, at the age of between ten and fifteen, shaved his head and wore a single pigtail at the back. When he had taken his first prisoner in battle, the soldier could remove this pigtail and replace it with a new hairstyle of a single lock of hair hanging over his right ear. If the recruit failed to capture a prisoner in four successive military campaigns, however, he was forced to wear a single pigtail forever—a humiliating fate. Knights ranked just below the Eagle Knights were called the “shorn ones” for their distinctive shaved heads and single, upright locks of hair that waved intimidatingly in battle. A messenger reporting war news back to Tenochtitlán bound his hair up if reporting a victory, but wore it loose over his face if the news was bad.

its own emblems, and successful warriors sewed these onto their body armor for identification. At military ceremonies, the captains wore leather collars decorated with rare shells, and lip ornaments in the shapes of their insignia. New soldiers wore plainer lip ornaments made from common shells or metals shaped like disks.

Body Armor

Aztec body armor needed to be light, flexible, and suitable for Mexico's hot climate. It also needed to protect the wearer against sharp obsidian arrows and javelins. Cotton,

a lightweight but strong fabric that lets air flow through easily, was supplied to Tenochtitlán from the coastal regions to make war garments. The most common battle garment was a one-piece suit of armor that combined a sleeveless top with knee-length trousers and fitted tightly around the body. Ordinary soldiers wore armor made from plain, white cotton, but soldiers of higher ranks decorated their outfits with colorful embroidered emblems. Warriors from the nobility sometimes added large, gold chest and back plates on top of their cotton armor.

These Aztec soldiers belong to the highest-ranking orders of knights: the Eagle Knight on the left is dressed in feathers and a beaked headdress; and the soldier on the right, wearing a suit of jaguar skins, is a Jaguar Knight.



Ritual and Sacrifice

Costumes played a central role in the Aztecs' religious and civil ceremonies. The Aztecs believed in many gods, each of whom wore distinctive ornaments and articles of clothing. The earth goddess Coatlicue wore a skirt of poisonous snakes. The rain god Tlaloc wore a mask that ringed his eyes, a fringe over his mouth, and clothes that were the blue-green color of water.

The Aztecs believed that in order to have rain, a good harvest, or success in battle, they needed to offer sacrifices of blood and human victims to the gods. Many Aztec ceremonies involved this ritual. At the end of the Aztec year, priests dressed in the costumes of the gods for a processional ceremony. The Aztec emperor dressed in sumptuous, symbolic costumes that reinforced people's perception of him as semi-divine. Ordinary Aztecs wore body paints and their finest clothing and accessories.

Blood and Bones

Aztec priests used human blood as an offering to the gods, and often practiced ritual human sacrifice. They lived and dressed in a terrifying manner. Priests fasted often and they were very thin. They never washed and never cut or combed their hair. Using cactus spines, they took blood from their own ears for religious offerings, and so their ears and hair were caked with blood. The priests covered themselves in long, black or dark green robes embroidered with patterns of human bones and skulls. During rituals, they painted their entire bodies with black paint that might have contained a drug.

Warrior Priests

Priests could also serve a religious function in the military, where they formed a separate class of warrior priests. These warrior priests could be identified in battle by the red paint on the sides of their heads. One of



Aztec priests dressed in special, symbolic costumes to enact their frequent rituals of human sacrifice.

Bound Together

On her wedding day, an Aztec bride put on ocher paste makeup to give her skin a yellow tone, and covered her arms and legs with red feathers. She then led a procession to the groom's house, where the groom waited for her on a ceremonial mat. The couple then sat together and anointed each other with perfume. The bride's mother gave the groom a new loincloth and cloak, and the groom's mother gave the bride a new skirt and blouse. Then the wedding ceremony official tied the man's cloak to the bride's blouse to symbolize their joined lives. At that moment they became man and wife.

several uniforms that they could wear was the Huastec uniform of a suit that covered the body and a conical hat in red, blue, yellow, green, white, or black, with white dots like stars.

Seasonal Ceremonies

At the spring festival for the god Xipe Totec, priests sacrificed and skinned human victims, then dyed their skins yellow and wore them, calling them *teocuitlaquemiltl*, or "golden clothes." These skins were to symbolize the new "skin" of fresh grass upon the earth. At the Volador

festival, four men dressed as birds attached themselves to ropes and jumped from a high pole, then spun around the pole to represent the circuit of the sun. For the Feast of Tezcatlipoca, the priests chose one young, unblemished man each year. This man dressed as the god for one year, wearing expensive clothing with black face paint, gold bracelets, and bells on his legs. At the year's end, a priest sacrificed him to the god, and the other Aztecs put on new clothes to mark the start of a new year.



This is how the Aztecs depicted Tlaloc, their rain god.



Chapter 5: The Native Americans

Native Americans

When the first European explorers arrived in North America in the sixteenth century, there were an estimated 1.3 million people already living there, who spoke more than two hundred different languages. The Native Americans did not have systems of writing or hieroglyphics. Instead they relied upon a strong oral tradition of storytelling and ritual reenactments to pass on their legends, history, spiritual beliefs, and cultural traditions to their descendants. As a result, much of what we know today about how the Native Americans lived and dressed comes from accounts told by the Europeans who first encountered them.

Ishtaboli

The Choctaw men loved to play ishtaboli, a stick and ball game that the French colonists renamed lacrosse. The game was so violent that the Choctaw called it “the little brother of war.” The Choctaw built huge playing fields that could hold up to seven hundred ishtaboli players at one time. To play, warriors and nobles would wear loincloths with fringed belts and elaborate structures covered in egret feathers that stuck out behind them like tails. They carried long sticks made from wood with webbed ends woven from strips of deer hide.

Because verbal language was so central to the Native American cultures, many native groups that shared a common language also had similar types of housing, farming, foods, and clothing. The Algonquian tribes of North



Choctaw *ishtaboli* players dressed in loincloths, fringed belts, feathered tails, and headdresses to play the violent game.

America are so called because they all spoke a similar language, as did the many tribes known as the Iroquois.

The Native Americans developed many different styles of clothing, depending on the climate, natural resources, and geography of the region where they lived. There were too many diverse native North American cultures to be described here. Instead, this chapter concentrates on a few important groups who met the first European settlers: the Iroquois and the Algonquian tribes of the north and northeast, and the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes of the southeast.

Natives of the Southeast

The southeast of North America is flat, warm, and humid, and it contains many thick forests, subtropical lands, and swamps that are home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Before the arrival of European settlers, it was also home to hundreds of different native tribes who fished, hunted, and farmed.

Although these tribes came from different cultural groups, the hot climate caused them to develop similarly light clothing styles and decorative body paints. These tribes included: the Cherokee, an Iroquois tribe; the Powhatans, an Algonquian tribe; and the Choctaw and the Chickasaw, who both spoke Muskogean languages.



This Native American woman wears deerskin robes decorated with symbols, and both she and her child wear beaded necklaces and hairbraids.

Necklaces and Body Paint

Men wore breechcloths and leggings made from tanned deer hides, sometimes covered with grass or leaves. Women wore fringed skirts, and sometimes shirts, made from tightly woven grass or deerskin. Occasionally, wealthier men and women wore sashes and deerskin cloaks decorated with turkey feathers, porcupine quills, beads, tree bark, and fur from bears, bison, and small game animals.

Both men and women wore necklaces, bracelets, armbands, and ear and nose plugs made from carved shells, wooden beads, pearls, feathers, and precious, imported copper. The higher their status, the more valuable the ornaments they wore. Many people tattooed themselves with patterns inspired by nature. They also painted their bodies with red body paint made from bloodroot and oils to protect themselves from insects.

The Iroquois

The Iroquois tribes were linked by similar languages and a common way of life. They farmed corn, beans, and squash, and built longhouses in the thick forests along the east coast of America from modern North Carolina to Canada, and inland from New York to the Great Lakes.

The Iroquois made all of their clothes from the furs and skins of animals, including deer, beavers, bears, bobcats, and squirrels. They decorated their clothes with fringe at the edges, and embellishments like shells, feathers, and porcupine quills. They wore moccasins made of elk or deer hide. The Iroquois also used red, black, violet, and green body paint on special occasions, and tattooed their bodies with designs inspired by animal and other natural forms.

Men's Clothing

Most clothing was made from leather sewn with sinew cords. During the hot summers an Iroquois man often wore nothing but a loincloth made of soft deerskin. He sometimes also wore a fringed deerskin sash over his right shoulder and attached to the waist. In colder weather, men wore

jackets with long sleeves and deerskin leggings. The seams on these and other garments were sewn outward and decorated with fringe. In extremely cold weather they wore long, fur-lined robes and capes. The Iroquois shaved all of their hair except for a strip from the forehead to the back of the neck, which was greased to stick up. Iroquois sachems, or lords, wore deer-antler headdresses.

Iroquois Women

In the summer, an Iroquois woman wore only a deerskin skirt that fell to her knees or ankles. She might also wear leggings that tied just above the knee. In colder weather, women wore shirts and long fur robes. Women wore their hair long and loose. The Iroquois regarded body hair as unattractive, and both men and women plucked it. Women wore jewelry including bracelets, necklaces, and earrings made from feathers, bones, clay, copper, and shells.

Wampum

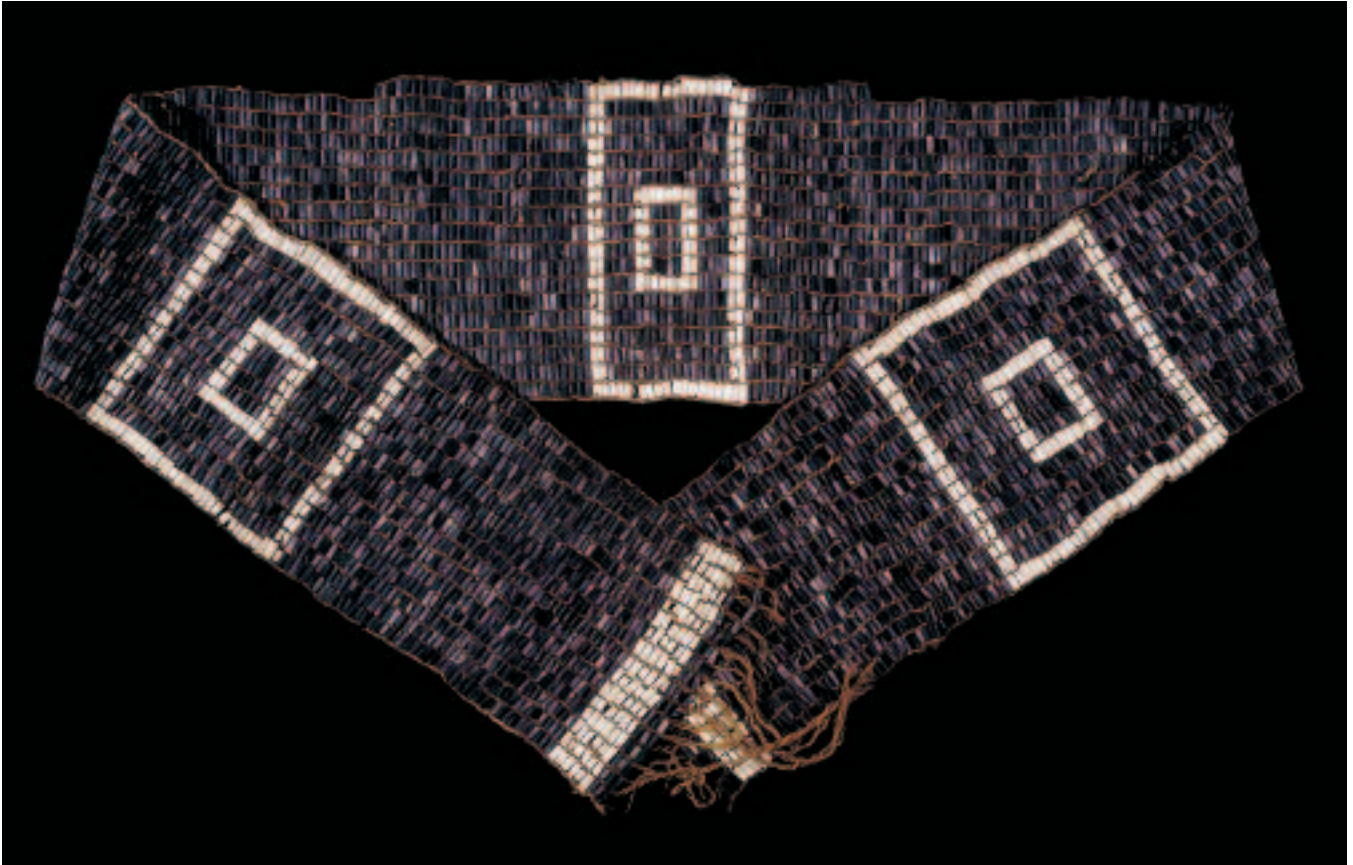
To the Iroquois, wampum was a symbolic, ritual object, exchanged during important peace and war



Iroquois man with typical dress and hairstyle.

The False Face Society

The False Face Society consisted of healers who claimed to use powerful spirits to purify Iroquois homes and heal the sick. They visited all of the households in an Iroquois village each spring and autumn, wearing masks that represented faces of the spirits. These faces might have been seen in dreams, glimpsed in the woods, or imagined by the healers. The expressions on the masks varied from humorous smiles to painful grimaces. The Iroquois carved these masks from wood and painted them, using horsehair to represent hair and metal disks and paint to represent eyes and other facial features.



pacts and treaties between tribes. Wampum consisted of a string or dense web of sinew or hemp fibers up to five inches (13 cm) thick that held decorative beads. It could be worn around the waist or over the shoulders and chest as a scarf.

The Iroquois tribes made wampum from strings of purple, white, and black shell beads that were woven in symbolic patterns into belts and girdles. The color white symbolized peace, and black meant sorrow. Purple signified seriousness, and was the most valuable color. When the European settlers came they traded glass beads for wampum with the Iroquois, and the Iroquois started to use wampum as currency for the first time.



The three white rectangles on this purple wampum belt may have symbolized an alliance.

In the winter, the Iroquois dressed in warm furs and deerskin leggings.

The Algonquians



This Algonquian hunter is dressed for a special occasion in body paint, a fringed deerskin apron, a puma's tail, a long bead necklace, and feathers.

Algonquian is a term that refers to the family of languages spoken by dozens of distinct Native American tribes. These tribes lived in the woods near lakes and rivers, in areas with low hills and suitable hunting grounds, all across North America. They fished and farmed, but their main source of food was hunting. Most Algonquian tribes lived in wigwams, although some built longhouses like the Iroquois. Their clothes varied according to tribe, and they could recognize each other's tribal identities through their dress.

Algonquian tribes included: the northern Micmac, who befriended the French fur traders; the Powhatans, who encountered the Virginia colonists; and the Lenni Lenape, who met the Dutch at New Amsterdam. Another Algonquian tribe was the Wampanoag, who met the Pilgrims when they arrived at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Most of the descriptions below are based on descriptions of Wampanoag clothing.

Clothing of Hunters

The Algonquians wore clothing made from animals they had killed while hunting. Deerskin from white-tailed deer was the most common material used for clothing. Sinew from deer, moose, and elk was used to sew the hides together to create garments. In colder climates the Algonquians would wear furs from whichever animals were in their local environment, including raccoons, bears, foxes, beavers, muskrats, squirrels, and harbor seals. They

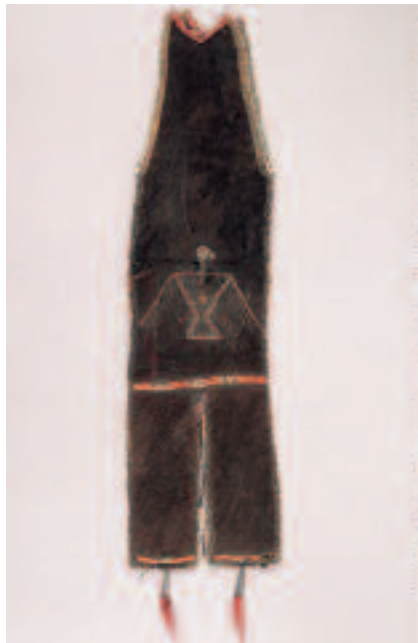
decorated their clothing with porcupine quills, shell beads, feathers, bones, and stones.

Leaders and chief warriors sometimes wore long robes decorated with feathers from wild turkeys or Canada geese. Both men and women wore jewelry such as earrings, necklaces, armbands, and headbands made from antlers, stones, shells, bones, and copper. They also decorated their bodies with tattoos and body paint. As the Algonquians were keen hunters, they wore cords around their necks that held knives in sheaths. They also carried tools and supplies in deerskin pouches tied to their waists or around their necks.

Mantles and Leggings

The basic garment for an Algonquian man was a loincloth worn between the legs, tucked up under a belt tied at the waist, with the ends hanging down in front and in back. Women wore a similar but slightly longer garment. In the cold north regions, both sexes wore mantles that wrapped around their shoulders or shirts. These were sometimes secured

at the waist by a belt made from plant fibers. Algonquian women wore skirts, or sometimes dresses, with deerskin leggings underneath that tied just above the knee. Men wore long leggings that tied to their loincloths with plant fibers or sinew at the waist. Like the Iroquois, the Algonquians used wampum as a ritual offering and a prestigious garment. Algonquian children did not wear any clothing until they were ten years old.



Algonquian deerskin pouch decorated with a Thunderbird symbol.

Moccasinas

Moccasin is an Algonquian word that means “shoe.” The plural of *moccasin* in Algonquian is *moccasinash*. Algonquian moccasins were made from deer, moose, or elk skins. Moccasins were soft-soled, low shoes constructed from a single piece of leather. This leather was fitted to the foot from underneath and sewn at the top in a central seam, which puckered around the instep. Decoration varied according to tribe and could include leather fringe, beaded floral and animal designs, or porcupine quills. Moccasins protected the wearer from the cold and helped him or her to travel over ground covered in leaves or pine needles. Algonquian people often went barefoot in the summer.